

House of Commons

party. It has listened to your explanation of what happened. The fact that an extract from a private letter written by the Speaker was published is a matter that is unfortunate, but to suggest that parliament should be dissolved because of it is, I think—

Mr. Low: Nonsense.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): The leader of the Social Credit party has used the word, so I will adopt it.

The Speaker was elected not by the government but by the House of Commons. He was nominated by the Prime Minister and that nomination was seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. He was elected unanimously by the whole house. This is a situation for the house to consider. The government was elected by a large majority to carry on the Queen's business for the usual period. It has now been in office a little less than three years. Whether or not the government should go to the country is a matter apart from the present dispute and will be settled by the procedure that governs dissolution of parliament under the usual circumstances.

The conduct of the Speaker has been impeached by the Leader of the Opposition. The motion was voted upon and voted down. Whether or not the publishing of an extract from a private letter changes that situation is a matter that must be considered.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister is away and I would not wish to comment on the situation until he returns. However, I shall report the situation to him and he will make such statements as seem appropriate at that time.

Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): I suggested to you, Mr. Speaker, when you were making your explanation that you might table the correspondence and you were kind enough to forward the original correspondence to me. Having translated it in the few moments at my disposal, I feel that it should be tabled. Expurgated portions of the correspondence have already appeared in the press. In addition to that, in today's press there is a full reference to the statement. The apology, if you will, of Mr. Cinq-Mars is published in detail, and that was prepared in your office last evening.

Under the circumstances, sir, in view of the fact that you refer to hon. members who have entrusted to your custody the rights and prerogatives of parliament and the preservation and maintenance of the honour of every member in this house, irrespective of his position in the house; in view of the fact you have referred in that correspondence to the hon. members whom you represent in

your high and dignified position as accusers, and have referred to the arguments that they advanced in parliament as a falsification of the facts for their own political ends, I say that the correspondence should be published. It is not a question of whether or not you, as Speaker of the house, should be able to defend yourself; that is past. What took place is past. What we have before us even today is that, although you are in a position where hon. members have entrusted to you their honour, they are here described by you in correspondence, whether personal or public—it is now public—as having falsified the facts. This is something which, in my opinion, deserves a very complete retraction on your part.

I ask, sir, for the tabling of the correspondence, the letter that you wrote to Mr. Cinq-Mars. The copy is marked "Personal" in lead pencil, but other than that there is no indication of personal correspondence whatever, from the beginning to the end, as I read it.

Mr. Speaker: I have no hesitation whatever in placing this correspondence at the disposal of the house on the understanding, of course, that when you table private correspondence in this house it means it is at the disposal of hon. members who may wish to take a look at it at the table. These are not documents produced by way of a motion. I know that Mr. Cinq-Mars, who has had this correspondence with me, will have no objection whatever because we discussed it last evening.

When the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) says that the letter of regret by Mr. Cinq-Mars was prepared in my office, I must say it was not prepared in my office in my presence. Mr. Cinq-Mars said, what can I do in order to repair whatever damage I may have caused you? I said, go out to my secretary and do whatever you please. I was not there when he dictated this letter. He did that, and he signed it and it was left with me.

Mr. Diefenbaker: There was no such suggestion in my statement. The press reported that it was done in your office, that is all.

Mr. Speaker: So far as I am concerned, I have no hesitation in putting this correspondence in the possession of the Clerk for all hon. members to consult and verify for themselves.

Now, the hon. member for Prince Albert has taken exception to me qualifying my colleagues as "accusers". Well, when you write a letter, and you have several to reply to, and you are writing to a gentleman who is asking you for an interview and you are