

*Morality in Government*

or discussion, even if they concern the actions of a preceding government—if they are of a kind that can be properly used and if they deal with matters pertaining to the current administration. The nature of the information, the nature, not the time covered by it, is a governing consideration.

The orders for the tabling of papers prove this every day in the week in the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker. In this session the opposition have demanded not only agreements concluded with other governments, provincial or foreign, but they have asked that discussions and working papers leading up to these negotiations be made public. This is quite a proper use of reports, inquiries, memoranda, files and so on, whatever previous period they cover, if they could properly be used in any period. It is quite proper to ask for and to see reports of police inquiries that have been made.

● (3:40 p.m.)

This is done by every government. It was done by me not very long ago, Mr. Speaker, in the case of Victor Spencer, with the knowledge and approval of the opposition. The reports in this case also covered a period when we were not in office.

Would it not have been perfectly proper for me to have seen these documents even if a member of parliament had been mentioned in them as having intervened? There was no such mention, Mr. Speaker, but if there had been such mention, in my view it would have been perfectly proper for me to examine these documents.

Those, Mr. Speaker, are the principles in regard to the use of material of the kind I have been discussing, and I have followed these principles in the situation under consideration to which reference has been made, though it is not specifically referred to, of course, in the amendment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let me look at the amendment. It reads as follows:

This house strongly deplores and condemns this government's actions in having the R.C.M. Police provide information to the government as to the past conduct of all members of parliament generally, a course of action which would destroy the independence of all members and undermine the institution of parliament.

That might well have been the result, Mr. Speaker, if that had been the action which was taken. But the R.C.M.P. were not asked by me or by any one else to provide information to the government as to the past conduct of all members of parliament generally. That

[Mr. Pearson.]

would indeed be an indefensible and shocking request which would go against all the rights of parliament and the rights of the individual; it would be a quite improper use by the executive of the powers of the police. But as I say, that request was not made.

Nor would it ever be made, Mr. Speaker, by any government of which I was the head. Our record as a government in defending the rights of parliament and the rights of the individual is a good one, and I do not propose to be apologetic about it any way, shape or form.

Within a few months of taking office, Mr. Speaker, we examined security regulations, the conduct of security investigations and the procedures of security investigations. We examined them and we altered them in the interests of liberalizing—and I use the word with a small "l"—the regulations to bring about greater protection of individual rights.

We are concerned, Mr. Speaker, with parliamentary and individual rights and parliamentary and individual privileges always being respected by government. We have already altered, as I have said, our security procedures to strengthen safeguards. A statement in great detail was made in this regard by the former minister of justice and by myself in this house in 1963. We are now in the process, which I hope will become completed very shortly, of setting up a royal commission to examine into general security procedures, which will include the conduct of inquiries. I think that will be a step forward too.

Now let us look at the particular situation at the end of November, 1964 which, while not specifically mentioned in this amendment, was undoubtedly in the minds of those who moved and seconded the amendment. At that time, Mr. Speaker, I asked for the results of inquiries that had been made. I did not ask, of course, for inquiries to be made. I asked for the results of inquiries that had been made in regard to particular conduct and dealing with particular matters.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Which ones?

**Mr. Pearson:** Mr. Speaker, I will be very glad, if my right hon. friend will contain himself—

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I want to get the truth.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Pearson:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted at my right hon. friend's determination to get the truth, and I think he will get it. As