

Ministerial Conduct

Mr. MacEwan: Perhaps if hon. members, particularly the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Robichaud), will wait for a moment, I will indicate the actions of those ministers which I believe to be inconsistent with the proper conduct of ministers of the crown.

Before I move the motion, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will be allowed to mention briefly the importance and urgency of this matter. As you will recall, on December 1 the hon. member for Cape Breton South placed the following question on the order paper:

Arising out of the investigation into bankruptcy frauds now in progress in Montreal, has the government secured any information showing that the records and documents connected with bankruptcy proceedings by Max and Adolph Sefkind and/or their companies disclose contributions for campaign purposes to any cabinet ministers or other members of parliament, and, if so, to whom and in what amounts?

Without going into the details, Mr. Speaker, on December 8 the Secretary of State was reported in the press as having revealed that he had dealings in the amount of some \$6,800 in relation to the purchase of furniture from the now bankrupt United Upholsterers Limited. He said he had received this furniture in 1961 and in 1963, not having made a down payment or arrangements for payment, and began to make payments after receiving a demand from the trustees in bankruptcy in January, 1964.

On December 9 the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was reported in the press as having volunteered similar information to news representatives. In this case the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration stated that deliveries of some \$3,341 worth of furniture had been made to him between November 15, 1963, and January 10, 1964. He stated that he had received it under similar conditions, and that he made a final payment upon the demand of the same Bank of Montreal.

On December 9 the Prime Minister was reported in the press as having made the following statement:

I make no statement until I have all the facts, in contrast to allegations and innuendos. When I have all the facts, I'll make any statement that is appropriate.

We do not know what further facts the Prime Minister might be waiting for, but information about this matter which is so important to parliament should be brought before parliament at this time.

As to the importance of this matter, without reading any of the many reports which have been made throughout the country, as is known to Your Honour for some time there

has been a great deal of speculation and an extraordinary amount of questioning in the press and over other media, t.v. and radio, having a bearing upon the propriety of the actions of the two ministers.

As to the urgency of the matter, if Your Honour will allow me, and in view of the fact that it is the last day before we adjourn for—

Mr. Pearson: That is what you think.

Mr. MacEwan: That is what the house leader stated last night. Perhaps the Prime Minister will check with his house leader.

Mr. Pearson: He said he hoped, but that hope is now gone.

Mr. MacEwan: All right; we hope that to be the case, and this is a good time of the year to have hope. This is the time when this matter should be brought forward. I have set forth the matters of importance, as set out in the motion which I should like to move. No statements have been made in this House of Commons by the ministers concerned, which could have been made on questions of privilege. They have made voluntary statements to the press, and I suggest that is to their credit; but I believe in regard to matters of such importance, dealing with cabinet ministers in this country, the House of Commons and parliament are entitled to an explanation. Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin):

That the house do now adjourn in accordance with standing order No. 26 to discuss a matter of urgent public importance.

I have already set out that matter, Mr. Speaker, and I will not repeat it now.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, are you going to allow discussion on this matter? On the question of urgency and the public importance of this question, Mr. Speaker, I would say first that nothing is more important than that the actions and activities of ministers of the crown shall, like Caesar's wife, be free from any suggestion of impropriety. The only explanation that has been made has consisted of statements by the two ministers, made outside the House of Commons, which, for want of a better expression, I would say had all the appearances of political upholstery of a situation that demands an explanation.

An hon. Member: Furnish us with the facts.

Mr. Diefenbaker: No opportunity has been given up to the present time to ask any questions on this matter. As the hon. member for