

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

desk, which is just what the President of Privy Council did in his intervention today. He probably acquired it by some form of intellectual osmosis from his seatmate, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who often operates in this way.

I want to deal with something brought up by the President of Privy Council. He quoted very selectively from some of the proceedings of the royal commission. It runs in my mind that, having done so, he might well be in a position of having to table that evidence in its entirety. The President of Privy Council said something about let us wait until former commissioner Higgitt gets back in the witness stand. I think he has forgotten that former commissioner Higgitt has been on the witness stand, I understand, in camera, that is, in secret, at the instance obviously of this government. The decision, of course, is entirely that of the commission. But certainly we have had some fair indication in the House that when proceedings of the royal commission get into a very delicate and difficult stage for the government, its members are quite happy to make application, through counsel, that the commission consider holding its proceedings in camera. This is precisely what has transpired.

If the government wants to know what the facts are, if the question is going to arise as to what the practice was and what was it that was said by the commissioner, what his views are and what his comments will be with regard to the question of opening of mail, let us have an opportunity to find out. Let us have a committee of this House, the ultimate and final court in the country, acting for and on behalf of members of the House, to study, to examine, and to challenge. Let us find out.

The President of Privy Council sought to draw a red herring before us, as he admitted himself, by quoting with some humour what was in the letter. That is not the issue, Mr. Speaker. What was in that letter was not the issue. What this House and hon. members are faced with is a simple question. Was there a deliberate deception by the authorities of a senior member of parliament? I must treat that very seriously.

I am amazed that the President of Privy Council, one of the great parliamentarians of this House, is obviously so alarmed at what is liable to come out in a committee meeting that he uses his undoubted talents to confuse the issue and evade his responsibility. He has indicated he intends to vote against the motion. Apparently he does not want the facts to come out.

● (1652)

Mr. Pinard: We have the McDonald commission.

Mr. Baldwin: The parliamentary secretary, who takes his cue from the President of Privy Council, must realize the government will use its best endeavours to try to persuade the McDonald Commission to sit in secret whenever there might be dangerous and embarrassing facts about this government to be introduced. In any event, the report of the royal commission will be made to the government. Only those parts of the proceedings of the royal commission as may be seen proper to be made public in the opinion of the royal commission, will be made public.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

This House is interested in the truth. The government may not be. Members on this side, certainly the members of this party, want the truth to come out.

Mr. Pinard: It will come out.

Mr. Baldwin: I am just amazed at what are the possible consequences of the evidence and facts we have heard. If the authorities are perfectly willing to attempt to deceive a senior member of this House, what about the public? What about the people whom I represent and those represented by my friends? What about the people who are represented by members on the government side? What manner of deception is being practised on them?

We have some facts which are an indication of what is going on. It is a shocking illustration of the fact that the government of this country faces a crisis in confidence. This is not a matter of inflation or unemployment. It is a lack of credibility and confidence. It flows from the kinds of actions we have seen carried on by the authorities, and today condoned and approved by the President of Privy Council. That is the situation which has to be of great alarm and concern to all of us.

The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) made a very moving and eloquent address, studded with illustrations. I thought it would have been accepted. I did not intend to get into the debate until it became apparent that the government was not going to accept it. That address was supported by the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggett). I thought the President of Privy Council would have got up and said that, although they do not accept all the facts, they are prepared to let the matter go to a committee of this House in order to find out where the truth lies. Obviously the government fears the truth as the devil does holy water. Is it a fact the government should recognize and the people of Canada must recognize.

This case is bringing us into the jungle of misinformation, the Byzantine ways of secrecy and deception practised by the authorities. We have been aware of this for some time. It explains a lot of things. It has been established as *prima facie* in the minds of a lot of people. I say *prima facie*, because if government members are willing to accept their own independent and objective judgment and allow a committee of this House to examine this issue, we may get the facts out. In that case, what will be a *prima facie* case, as now established by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, may be an opportunity for the House, through its agents on the committee, to find out where the truth lies.

Mr. Pinard: You have the McDonald commission.

Mr. Baldwin: The parrots opposite insist on speaking about the McDonald royal commission. Something the members of the government do not realize is that the privileges of this House are the responsibility of members of this House and not of the McDonald royal commission. It is time members opposite learned that lesson. It explains why, when there is embarrassing or potentially damaging information, the authorities go