

Morality in Government

Prime Minister. I have a very high respect for him and I do not believe for one moment that these files, even if they were ordered—and presumably we will hear the Prime Minister's statement on that tomorrow—were ordered with any type of malice such as has been imputed to him here today.

We can all recall the atmosphere in the house—I have never been in such a poisonous atmosphere—in 1964 when allegations were made arising out of the Rivard affair, when a parliamentary secretary and an executive assistant were alleged to be involved in wrongdoing. Those charges were made from the benches opposite, and were used as a basis for wider generalization. We heard that there were going to be great bankruptcy revelations, but these did not come to fruition. It was said that somehow these bankruptcies were a link with the underworld. This lent a certain plausibility to these devastating generalizations, and so other reputations were hurt through unwarranted conduct for which we have never had any substantiation.

We all, as members of parliament, deplore this type of conduct. We all know that certain other members of the government are ghosts that must be present with us, members who were subjected to this generalization technique, but about whom wrongdoing was never substantiated. I cannot help but think of the ex-postmaster general. The justice who presided over the Dorion inquiry said he was a man who was completely exonerated, and that even in the furniture affair his conduct was above reproach. The justice even said that he should be exonerated by all men in public life. Yet he was subjected to this wide type of generalization which must have brought tremendous pain to himself and his family. It was an unjustified type of devastating generalization founded on innuendos and implications. We have all had to live with that type of conduct for the past three years.

Mr. Churchill: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Munro: For us to say now that we will forget all that in the past, because the alleged ordering of certain files by the Prime Minister is an implication that one man is the author of all that is wrong with the house, is a conclusion which is obviously ridiculous.

Mr. Churchill: Will the hon. member permit a question? When he is dealing with unfounded accusations would he deal with the press conference which the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cardin) held on March 10?

[Mr. Munro.]

Mr. Munro: Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish my comments and then I will be pleased to answer the hon. member's question. We are talking about all the allegations that were thrown about this house for a year and a half, involving bankruptcies that were never substantiated, and the origins of which followed closely upon the Rivard affair. We have all experienced the rumour craze that went around the corridors of this house, to a degree never experienced before, when reputations of members too numerous to mention were being compromised at random, whose names came up in the context of some improper conduct in their personal lives. We all know that there were rumours.

● (9:00 p.m.)

There were vicious rumours floating throughout the press gallery. It seemed that certain members were conducting their own private police force and dropping dark hints that they had revelations which would be coming forward to destroy some particular member of this parliament. If it is a political responsibility of anyone in public life, I would think it must be that of the Prime Minister—this is my own interpretation—to consult and have interviews with the R.C.M.P. to find out whether or not there is any substantiation for the vicious charges being levelled, whether in fact any of them were true or were on the other hand, unfounded gossip; and once that was ascertained it would be the end of the matter. But, to base charges on the assumption that the files were ordered for the purpose of threatening and blackmailing members I think is a motive which should be most distasteful and beneath the dignity of members.

That then was the type of atmosphere which we had for a year and a half. There is little wonder that these files would be ordered. I would have been very surprised if in fact they had not been ordered. I would think it would be the responsibility of any prime minister in the context of his oath as a privy councillor, to check out some of the rumours to find out whether in fact there was any truth to some of them, so that some action could be taken; but it certainly was not designed to discredit the actions of any member of parliament. This is my own interpretation. That disclosure at the inquiry did not surprise me. I suppose, if we listened to the hon. members here, we would think it was some type of outrageous conduct. I never cease to be amazed at how pious we politicians can become.