

Morality in Government

member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), who seconded the motion, made certain remarks which I am going to quote:

—I am going to deal with. . . the violation of the rights and privileges of private members in this house.

I shall tie that into the tactics that have been referred to whereby the R.C.M.P. has been used to investigate the background and past activities of hon. members for the sake of personal persecution, blackmail or for whatever the purpose might be.

This is a statement made by my hon. friend about the R.C.M.P. and its investigations. If this were so, Mr. Speaker, the investigation into this particular case which is before us, the Munsinger case, was conducted not by this government but by one of which he was a member in the course of the legitimate discharge of their responsibilities for security and administering the law but not, I am sure, for the purposes he mentions.

Perhaps my hon. friends could remain quiet for a few moments while I continue my speech. They will have an opportunity to participate.

Mr. Dinsdale: Since the Prime Minister has made remarks with reference to me may I ask, did he or did he not ask the R.C.M.P. for this information?

Mr. Pearson: If my hon. friend will wait he will find out.

Mr. Starr: Yes or no.

Mr. Pearson: He will find out. My hon. friend in his remarks did not say that. He said:

I shall tie that into the tactics that have been referred to whereby the R.C.M.P. has been used to investigate the background and past activities of hon. members for the sake of personal persecution, blackmail or for whatever the purpose might be.

Mr. Dinsdale: That is what the amendment says.

Mr. Pearson: It does, and I shall deal with it.

Mr. Dinsdale: Don't take my words out of context, as you have done in many instances.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dinsdale: Don't take my words out of context.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I should like to remind hon. members that the right hon. Prime Minister has the floor and should be allowed to make his statement.

Mr. Pearson: In the case we are considering, what is known as the Munsinger case, the R.C.M.P. were used exclusively in the investigations for the legitimate purpose of security. They had no other purpose in their actions and it would have been intolerable if there had been any other purpose. The operation of the police as a security service has only one purpose, that is, the defence of the country, and any interfering with any person must never go beyond that fundamental purpose, the defence of the country against subversive activities within and from without. These activities have nothing to do with a man's politics or morals or actions except when they are related to this primary security purpose.

I want to say a word now about a question that has been raised, though it was not raised in the debate yesterday but outside the house, about the propriety of the use by one government of reports and information bearing on the operations of a previous government. There are many reports and documents and, indeed, the great majority of reports, documents and records are quite proper to be brought to the attention of a government even if they concern activities during a previous administration. This is done and has been done since confederation as a normal aspect of governmental administration. Administration records, including inquiries and investigations and reports, can be used in this way except, and the exception is a very important one, memoranda to the cabinet, to cabinet committees, and records of discussions of the cabinet or cabinet committees they cannot be properly used. These cabinet papers may not even be seen by the successor government. Letters of understanding to this effect were exchanged when governments changed in Canada in 1957 and again in 1963. Cabinet and cabinet committee material will not be produced for a successor government by the secretary of the cabinet even if, which is inconceivable, a minister or prime minister should ask for it.

Other records are of a different character. In the Munsinger case, for instance, it was quite proper for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in their investigation to secure any immigration records concerning this case that covered the period of the previous Liberal government, and to show them to any minister of the succeeding government, and for that government to use them in the proper way. Such information and reports can be examined in this way, can be used in debate