

External Affairs

We have listened today to speeches of this kind. I wonder what the Canadian parliament has come to when a minister of the crown will get up, as did the Minister of National Health and Welfare and in a pious, unctuous way complain that the opposition should have the nerve to ask questions on the orders of the day about the Near East situation.

Neither he nor the Secretary of State for External Affairs nor the Prime Minister can quote one question asked last week which was out of order or which was not properly asked of the head of the government. The trouble was, Mr. Speaker, that on each occasion when the Prime Minister was asked a question about the Near East he lost his temper and made statements which he subsequently regretted, one of them being the statement about the use of force in the Near East which the two ministers connected with the United Nations have tried to explain and twist in their speeches today.

We have a right and a duty in the opposition to ask questions on the orders of the day on subjects which are of urgent importance; and may I point out to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all the hon. members of this house that there have never been more important subjects in so far as the Canadian parliament and the Canadian people are concerned than the subjects about which questions were asked here last week. Rightly or wrongly this government—and at the moment I am not taking any stand as to whether they were right or wrong—have placed Canada in a position where she is deeply involved in the Near East—

Mr. Pearson: The Middle East.

Mr. Green: Very well; the Middle East. We all know the area to which I am referring. We have about one-fifth of the troops engaged in the United Nations emergency force; we have far more troops in that force than any other nation. We have lent, or more likely given, \$1 million to start the work of clearing the canal. The United States lent only \$5 million, so we have given far more than our share. This government has got the country into this problem far more deeply than any other country in the world, and the situation as it exists today may result in young Canadians losing their lives. This is a matter on which the people, and certainly parliament, are entitled to the fullest information, and we have not had it. All the Prime Minister needed to do last week was answer those questions frankly as they were asked. But he did not do that; as I said a few moments ago, he lost his temper on each occasion and made no proper answer to most of those questions.

On one occasion at least he resorted to a subterfuge. He said, "I only know what I have read in the papers". We have an ambassador in Cairo, and there is an Egyptian ambassador here in Ottawa within a few yards of this parliament building. Yet the Prime Minister told the house he could only tell us what he had read in the papers. If that was an accurate answer there is something wrong with the Department of External Affairs, because in a situation such as the one which is facing Canada today the Prime Minister should have up to the minute information.

Mr. Speaker, the reason we get answers like that, and the reason we have had speeches like those we have heard from the two ministers today, is that this government has been so long in power, supported by so large and subservient a majority, that it has become contemptuous of parliament. This government has completely lost its sense of responsibility to parliament and to the Canadian people.

Mr. Gardiner: You have lost your sense of humour.

Mr. Green: May I give notice today that when we consider questions should be asked on the orders of the day or at any other stage of the proceedings we propose to ask—

Mr. Pickersgill: Whether you are in order or not.

Mr. Green: Oh, the minister of immigration had better keep out of this.

Mr. Pickersgill: I suppose no one has the right to an opinion except the hon. gentleman.

An hon. Member: He hasn't any.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Applewhaite): Order.

Mr. Green: We propose to follow our own sense of duty in asking those questions, and if the ministers cannot answer them, or refuse to answer them, that will be their responsibility.

Mr. Pickersgill: Regardless of the rules?

Mr. Green: They will be responsible for following that course.

Mr. Pickersgill: Turning parliament into a quiz program.

Mr. Green: There was one other statement made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare which intrigued me, and that was his reference to the power of moral force in the world. He went from there into an argument that because of this power of moral force the Conservatives should keep still in the House of Commons.