know a person by the name of Olga Munsinger. A person by that name is now reported to have said that she lunched with me twice, seven or eight years ago. She may well be right. Although I still do not recall knowing any person by that name, I have examined the pictures of that person in the Saturday newspapers and I believe I recognize the woman pictured there. I make this statement, Mr. Speaker, to prevent anyone from being misled by my previous statements, made without the benefit of information now available.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a further point abundantly clear. The real and only issue which arises from the charges made last week by the Minister of Justice both inside and outside this house, is the security of the nation. That is the overriding consideration, and I hasten to assure the house that at no time has my personal conduct jeopardized security. I defy the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice to say that I ever did anything to jeopardize or affect the security of my country. I challenge them now to stand up and say that I did.

Subject always to the nation's security and welfare, who my acquaintances are or may have been, or who the acquaintances of any hon. member of this house are or may have been is not a public issue. Mr. Speaker, Canadians everywhere have viewed the recent debate in this house with grave concern. I hope this statement will assist in restoring public respect for and confidence in this house and its members.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (2:50 p.m.)

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, as has just been said, this parliament is at a crisis, a crisis which calls upon all its members to think first of the institution and not of their personal or partisan position. This I intend to be the guiding principle in what I have to say this afternoon. But I have some things to say which I think the house is entitled to hear and which may cast some light upon the situation, light which will help us to sort our way out of the situation on the one hand and avoid falling into such situations again on the other.

With the principles as stated by the Prime Minister a moment ago as to the position of parliament, I fully agree. With the approach stated a moment ago by my colleague the hon. member for Northumberland, we all agree. But it must be said, sir—I shall return to that theme at the close of my remarks—that one could have wished the Prime Minister had not given such belated recognition to that principle.

It must be said also that the situation in which we find ourselves today is clearly and entirely the result of its having been brought on deliberately, and by the deliberate policy and course of this government over the past week or 10 days. In some of the remarks I have to make I find myself in a distasteful position because they reflect upon the office of the Minister of Justice; but it is inevitable that the matter be put in its proper context. They reflect also upon the Prime Minister and his conduct; because not only, I assure you, do I realize that the government have placed themselves on trial but they have placed parliament on trial, and they have brought us close to the ruin of this institution.

What is happening? What are we seeing in the attempt that has been made and the attempt that it appears is still being made? I suggest to you, sir, that we are seeing something attempted which we have never seen before in the history of any major, successful democracy; a witch hunt against former governments and their leaders, a witch hunt which might be acceptable on the basis of some form of tribal rite but which one would have hoped was below and behind the stage to which this country of Canada has progressed; a witch hunt carried out on the basis of security matters.

Challenges have been hurled across the floor of this house: "If you don't be quiet about the matter you are speaking of now, I will expose the files." Sir, who can this help? It can help only the enemies of the state. It can only do damage to parliament and to the parties involved, who should be here on the basis of their desire to serve the state.

We see a witch hunt on the basis of evidence slim and shoddy. What is being asked but the trial of a former Prime Minister; "open up the files. Expose everything you can find and we will put him on trial and we will get him." That is what they said over there, and said deliberately and not accidentally; "Put him on trial, not in parliament. Put on trial all those who were members of the former government. Not in parliament, no. We will not answer in parliament, where charges should be substantiated. We will not even make the charges in parliament. We make them outside and then we put them on trial in another forum even while parliament