

Morality in Government

[English]

SUPPLY

The house resumed from Monday, May 2, consideration of the motion of Mr. Sharp for committee of supply, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Fairweather.

MORALITY IN GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT—NEED FOR REFORM

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I feel I should begin by expressing my regret at not being here yesterday to listen to the speeches of the mover and seconder of the amendment. I must confess that my regret in that regard has been mitigated somewhat by the opportunity of reading the speeches in *Hansard*.

I shall do my best, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the facts of the situation which, according to the statements made in the house yesterday, have brought about this amendment. I recognize at once that I am handicapped in approaching this task; I must be handicapped in the eyes of the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) at least because according to him I have now reached my second childhood and should not be talking about things like this especially since, in his elegant words, I am at the moment bug-eyed from reading about sex.

I listened, Mr. Speaker, on Sunday night to the hon. member talk on television about improving the character of politics and the atmosphere of parliament. This is the kind of language about a prime minister in this country, whoever he may be, which, of course, elevates political life in Canada. I warn my hon. friend that if he is not careful he will soon rival the picturesque and at times offensive extravagances of the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Hamilton).

The mover of this amendment said the institution of parliament is on trial, and he is quite right. It is indeed and in many ways not mentioned by him yesterday. In moving this amendment he was not, of course, dealing with those ways. There is a relation between amendments and these other pressures on parliament which in my view are weakening it as an institution. One of these pressures is our ability to get things done, to adapt our procedures to the requirements, and the struggle in this regard is often referred to as a deterioration of parliamentary action and parliamentary atmosphere, which is not in any sense peculiar to Canada.

[Mr. Speaker.]

All those who have been reading the *London Times* and other United Kingdom papers in the last week or two will have noted that they have been philosophizing about the opening of parliament in that country after the last election and the work which is before it. They have been expressing doubts about the ability of the mother of parliaments to deal with all the important matters with which it should be dealing. I believe that we can adapt ourselves to these changes, but to do that we have to change ourselves and yet change in a way which will not betray but will retain democratic elective control over the executive and protect always the fundamental rights of the individual against the executive or against anybody or anything else.

● (3:30 p.m.)

I am just as concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the preservation of the rights of parliament and of the individual as any member in this house. I share that concern, I am sure, with all members of this house. The hon. member for Royal (Mr. Fairweather) has cited as evidence of his uneasiness, which has resulted in this amendment, certain things that have been going on in a royal commission of inquiry. In producing his amendment and bringing his subject to our attention, he did not wait until that inquiry was completed, until all the evidence was in and the examination of witnesses or re-examination of witnesses was completed. He based his motion on one day's evidence and made statements about that evidence which I consider to be tendentious, and in my view he has drawn some unwarranted conclusions from that evidence.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and his friends, having interpreted this particular piece of evidence as they saw fit and I or any other member of the government having said nothing about it in the house in answer to questions because Mr. Speaker ruled the questions out of order, complain that, in his words, an unnamed spokesman for the government dared to give another interpretation in defence against distortion and misrepresentation of the position as we see it.

The hon. member is concerned, he says, and I know he is because he has given evidence of this over the months and years he has been in political life, about morality in government. So am I, Mr. Speaker, and I think I have shown my concern. I wish the hon. member had been able to postpone his expression of this concern in this particular instance until the evidence was in. The hon.