

Morality in Government

The argument put forward by the government in defence of the proposition that the debate should be confined within very narrow limits is that evidence such as this cannot be put before the house though it can be discussed outside. There is the great difference. This evidence has been published in papers across the country and yet we are not allowed to discuss it here.

I might make another point, Mr. Speaker, since you have permitted me to speak again. This afternoon the Prime Minister was given an opportunity to put his own interpretation on the evidence given by the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. That is exactly what happened this afternoon and I think that threw the gates wide open. I do not think that any rule applies to the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, just to make our position clear I would suggest—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pearson: —that we should leave the matter entirely in your hands.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have been trying to obtain assistance from hon. members on the point of order which has been raised, which is a very serious one. I am wondering whether this is the point which the Prime Minister is raising at this time.

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker. I have just suggested that as we have made our point we should leave the matter in your hands and the right hon. gentleman should be allowed to proceed.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, I will not take very long on the point of order, but it does seem obvious to me that we are going to be asked at 8.15 tonight to vote on the amendment to the motion which is based almost exclusively, it appears to me, on the testimony given by the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Prime Minister gave his version today of the discussions he had with the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. and the instructions he gave to the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. I have listened very carefully to the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, and it seems to me that his version is in direct contradiction of the testimony given by the commissioner of the R.C.M.P.

Mr. Pearson: It is not.

Mr. Orlikow: I wish the Prime Minister had himself quoted from the testimony and had said clearly and specifically that the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. was wrong or was misinformed or did not remember what had taken place, but the Prime Minister did not do that.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that to enable us to vote tonight somebody should put these quotations on the record, and I would ask the Prime Minister to answer the specific allegation made by the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. It may be that a narrow interpretation of the rules makes this impossible, but if that is the case the loser will be the Prime Minister because everybody in the country and every newspaper, Liberal, Conservative or independent, has taken the same interpretation. Therefore I appeal to the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers not to obstruct the introduction of this quotation but to co-operate, and I would ask the Prime Minister to make the statement and to give the answer for which the public are waiting.

Mr. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, may I ask one question? Does the authority to which you have referred in making this ruling relate to a court of law in this country? I submit that a court of law in this country is not the same as a court of inquiry. I would suggest that if the authority referred to a court of law you would by this ruling be raising a court of inquiry to the same level as a court of law, and I submit those two bodies are not the same.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I feel the only thing I can do is again to quote the ruling to which I referred earlier. The point raised by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek is that the ruling to which I referred, the ruling of Mr. Speaker MacDonald, relates not to a royal commission but to a court of law. It was the opinion of the learned Speaker that although we might discuss the matter in general we should not refer to evidence or proceedings before or the findings of a royal commission.

I very much fear I must ask for the co-operation of the Leader of the Opposition in paraphrasing the evidence in words which are somewhere between the two extremes, taking a middle course which might satisfy both the Chair and the members of the house. However, the ruling is there. I did not make the ruling but I am bound by it. It says clearly and specifically that when a royal commission is currently discussing a matter