

Morality in Government

statement attributed by the press to the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. when it has appeared in every newspaper in Canada and has been quoted over every radio and television station. I submit, Your Honour, that you have permitted the Prime Minister this afternoon to give his side of certain events. If you deny members on this side of the house the opportunity to quote what the R.C.M.P. commissioner said about those events, you are certainly doing in reverse the very thing to which the Minister of Agriculture is objecting, namely, allowing one side of the story to be told and denying members the right to give the other side of the story by revealing the statement of the R.C.M.P. commissioner.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Speaker, lest the house be beguiled by the rather beguiling suggestion of the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam, I think it should be recalled, as has been pointed out by the Minister of National Health and Welfare, that the Prime Minister made certain statements of his own knowledge. There is nobody, except the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who can make statements of his own knowledge. I suggest that for a second person to take a press report which may or may not be an accurate transcript of the evidence and parade it in this house as though it were the direct knowledge of that person is a travesty of ordinary justice. It is for this reason we have the rule which Mr. Speaker Macdonald and His Honour have upheld. The rule was upheld a moment ago in response to a point raised by the Minister of Agriculture that the evidence could not be quoted directly or indirectly until all the evidence had been heard. This is exactly the same point Your Honour made yesterday in your original decision. It is clear and precise. I suggest that debate on a motion introduced by an hon. member who wants to restore the rights and dignities of parliament should conform to the rules of the house.

Mr. Starr: I rise on the point of order. I have listened with interest to the arguments that have been put forward by members of the treasury benches. They claim that no evidence can be quoted in this house until all the evidence has been gathered. I am not going to quote from any authority or read any excerpts from rule books. However, logic and common sense, as well as a sense of justice, tell me that this evidence has been published day by day, word by word, in

[Mr. Douglas.]

newspapers across this country and has been commented upon by editorial writers. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we sit in this house as representatives of the people and find the government hiding behind a shield of rules and rule books. We are not permitted to bring this evidence out because some sort of closure is put on us. I suggest that we should have the same rights as any editorial writer or newspaperman who has written about, quoted word for word from, or expressed his opinions on, the evidence. But we are deprived of these rights, which I think is illogical, irrelevant and certainly is beyond common sense.

● (5:00 p.m.)

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member for Ontario a question arising out of his remarks for clarification purposes?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the minister addressing the Chair on the point of order?

Mr. McIlraith: Yes, and I wanted some clarification.

Mr. Starr: The house leader is hiding behind a point of order in asking me a question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McIlraith: I would ask the hon. member—

Mr. Speaker: Would the minister kindly address the Chair on his point of order?

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, I will be very glad to try to make myself heard over the din. The point I was seeking to raise was this. I did not understand one part of the remarks of the hon. member for Ontario, so I should like to ask for clarification of one short part of those remarks. If the hon. member is ready to accept a question I would be glad to put it. It is simply this. Is it the hon. member's argument on the point of order that we should seek to establish order and re-establish the dignity of parliament by disregarding the rule book?

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, this is another piece of camouflage in the smokescreen put up by the government in connection with what is transpiring here in the form of a point of order and the opportunity of hon. members to say what they think should happen in the light of what some authorities say. There is a tremendous difference between this situation and the normal situation in this House of Commons, and the difference is this.