

Morality in Government

An hon. Member: You will have to do better than that.

Mr. Pearson: I heard someone say: "You will have to do better than that." What I am doing is telling the facts—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson:—and if it can be shown that any statement I am making today is not a fact or that it is untrue, then I stake my reputation on that. I cannot do more than that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: There are many questions being asked in this house and in the press. Many of the answers to these questions will, I think, be given in the course of the inquiry which is now in the process of being conducted. Those questions which I have felt I could answer without infringing the responsibility of that inquiry, I have tried to answer, and I will summarize those answers in very simple language which will state my position clearly on this matter.

First, we should ask ourselves and have, indeed, asked ourselves: Has the R.C.M.P. ever been ordered by the Prime Minister or anyone on behalf of the Prime Minister to inquire into the private lives and activities of any member of parliament? The answer is, no.

Second, did the Prime Minister keep in his possession or in the files of his own office any report by the R.C.M.P. or anyone else on the Munsinger case? The answer is, no.

Third, did the Prime Minister have any knowledge of any kind that the name Munsinger was to be mentioned in any debate in this house? Again, the answer is, no.

Fourth, did the government, as the amendment before this house alleges, have the R.C.M.P. provide information to the government as to the past conduct of all members of parliament? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is, no.

I know that these questions and variations of them have been asked as a result of interpretations placed on evidence which has now been given before Mr. Justice Spence. As you have ruled, Mr. Speaker, and, indeed, as my principles dictate, I cannot discuss the evidence placed before that commission of inquiry. I wish I could and perhaps the time will come when I can. But the interpretation placed on that evidence to date has gone far beyond the evidence itself and questions are being asked concerning my motives and my

[Mr. Pearson.]

actions at the end of November, 1964, in connection with this particular inquiry. These I have done my best to deal with.

I submit that my motives in asking for that inquiry were understandable and were honourable and that this amendment, which is inaccurate and false in its very wording, should not meet the approval of the house. I ask the house to vote against it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Douglas: Before the Prime Minister takes his seat may I be permitted to ask him a question which I think is important since all of us are trying to understand his statement fully? The Prime Minister said he kept notes of his conversation with the commissioner of the R.C.M.P. I ask the Prime Minister if the notes he kept confirm the statement which was made by the commissioner when he said, "I was then asked if I had any information indicating any impropriety or anything of a scandalous nature involving any member of parliament in any party over the last ten years." I want to ask the Prime Minister if that statement corresponds to the request which the Prime Minister made to the commissioner, according to the notes which the Prime Minister has retained?

Mr. Pearson: No, they do not correspond, Mr. Speaker; quite the contrary. I am not quarreling and have no right to quarrel with the commissioner's evidence—I am not sure I should even comment on it—but if the commissioner is referring to personal improprieties and personal scandals, there is nothing in my notes to confirm that. If he was talking about scandal in the sense of the Rivard scandal, and at that time the word "scandal" was being tossed about in this house without any reference except to political scandal, if the commissioner was referring to that kind of scandal I was looking for that kind in the relation of members of parliament with government departments and their intervention on behalf of dubious elements. That is the kind of thing I was looking for because that is the kind of thing that was being talked about every day and with which we were being charged.

Mr. Dinsdale: I wonder whether the Prime Minister would accept another question. If the part he played in these matters is as pure and innocent as he indicates, how is it that the Minister of Fisheries on December 14, 1964, could approach me with a threat of dire consequences about something I had done