

Morality in Government

I can understand what motivated the hon. gentleman in bringing forward this resolution. I am not criticizing him for doing it. I know the hon. gentleman who is bringing this matter forward, and I know what influences him in the judgments he makes in matters that concern us. But surely I am not asking too much when I ask hon. members to take into account the fact that there will be an opportunity given to the head of this government, to the Prime Minister, to explain his interpretation of the events which Mr. Speaker now has decided may be discussed within our rules.

I have said that I have full confidence in the Speaker of this house and in the decision he has made. I would ask the house to consider carefully what I have said, and I would not ask this if I were not perhaps the man in the house who has been here longest.

An hon. Member: That is a one-sided argument.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Well, it may be a one-sided argument, but I assure my hon. friend that it is a necessary one.

I say to this house, as the right hon. gentleman opposite has said many times, parliament still remains the effective embodiment of the national will. It may not be at any given moment what the people of this country would like it to be. There have been many periods in history when the Canadian people have complained about their deliberative assembly. I say tonight, in the remaining hours of this debate, we ought to make sure, before passing judgment that we have all the facts before us. Only then, if we are true to the ideals and traditions of what this parliament professes to be, will we have the right to reach conclusions which are now implicit in this amendment, as though there had been full disclosure of all that was involved.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Disclosure?

Mr. Peters: Would the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs permit a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Yes, of course.

Mr. Peters: I should like to know if he has within his knowledge the answer to a rumour that has been widely circulated. I ask this question only because he has mentioned the Spencer case. The rumour is, and looking at the evidence that we have before us it would seem that there is a basis for it, that the head of the R.C.M.P. brought forth this information in question on a rather voluntary basis, rather than being asked questions about it—if I follow the proceedings correctly.

The story that is abroad is that the Prime Minister, through the Minister of Justice and several others, was threatened by the R.C.M.P. to protect the R.C.M.P., and that when the Spencer inquiry was granted, that was done despite the objections of the R.C.M.P. For this reason, I ask the minister, is it within his knowledge to say whether or not this is a vindictive attack that is being made on the Prime Minister by persons outside this house.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I do not believe that.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I say, I do not believe it. I do not know, but I do not believe that there is any basis for that. I do not know the facts but I do not believe that people generally in authority are so motivated. I cannot bring myself to think that that kind of thing happens to reasonable and well intentioned men.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my participation in this debate will be as brief as the participation of those who preceded me. All of us, I think, are unhappy that a debate such as this is necessary, and we find that the views we wish to express can be stated briefly.

• (8:40 p.m.)

I speak in the context in which the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Fairweather) opened the debate and to which the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) made reference, namely the confidence which all of us have in the institution of parliament. Not only do we in this house believe in parliament but we confidently feel it will survive the trials and tribulations through which it is passing.

Nevertheless, we are all aware that parliament is on trial. We know that the people of this country are asking the question which was quoted this afternoon by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale): What is wrong with parliament?

I realize that anyone who sets out to answer a question as weighty as that runs the risk of being accused of knowing too much about other people's faults. But I feel the only reason for participating in this debate is to try to give an answer to that question.

In my opinion the speech just made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs revealed the answer that is in my mind. He found it necessary—and I think this is sad and