

The Address—Mr. Pearson

parliament and this government will not condone, conceal or hide such matters. I say through you, sir, to the Minister of Justice that we want to know about the Sefkind bankruptcy. We do not want that matter put into cold storage, because there is something which the country is concerned about. You do not elevate the minds of Canadians when you see concealment of that kind. What about the Sefkinds? They are abroad, out of the country, having robbed the Canadian people of \$2 million, the extent of their bankruptcy. They sold furniture on time.

Mr. Starr: Pay as you like.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then they forgot about asking for payment, and no payment was made until after they went into bankruptcy. These are the kind of things that cause me to believe that more was expected, much more, in the speech from the throne, and that the highest priority should have been given to a declaration on the subject of public men and their integrity. Because unless this is accepted, parliament suffers and the Canadian people suffer. It does not matter what happens to us; but it does matter when all across this nation people are asking themselves what has happened.

Therefore, sir, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr):

That the following be added to the address:

"We respectfully regret that Your Excellency's advisers, because of confusion and indecision in dealing with national problems, and the careless indifference and neglect of the Prime Minister in refusing to take action to eradicate wrongdoing in high and low places under federal responsibility and to restore public confidence in the honesty and integrity of government, no longer enjoy the confidence of this house and of the Canadian people".

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin by agreeing with the right hon. gentleman in one respect, and I think it will be the only respect in which I will be able to agree with him this afternoon and this evening, and that is in the tribute which he paid to the mover and the seconder of the address in reply to the speech from the throne the hon. members for St. John's West (Mr. Cashin) and St. Maurice-Lafleche (Mr. Chrétien). Knowing these two members, Mr. Speaker, I expected a high standard of performance from them in the discharge of a responsible duty, and I was not disappointed and I am sure the house was not disappointed. They did great credit to themselves and to their provinces in the statements that they made.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what about this amendment and the two and a half hours speech which introduced it? Or am I exaggerating? As I listened to the right hon. gentleman wander from subject to subject, from place to place and from document to document, I could not help but think of words which I have already quoted in this house on previous occasions:

Cold upon the dead volcano,
Sleeps the gleam of dying day.

The volcano, Mr. Speaker, however, did erupt on occasion with great vigour, and while I do not want to spend too much time on the eruptions, there are a few things that cannot be left to go unchallenged; and believe me, Mr. Speaker, most of them are very easy indeed to refute.

Perhaps I should begin, Mr. Speaker, where the right hon. gentleman ended. He made an attack upon the government, which is reflected in the amendment, for its failure in refusing to take action to eradicate wrongdoing in high and low places under federal responsibility. He saw fit, Mr. Speaker, to make a strong attack on immorality—"unmorality", as he has been calling it outside the house—in government, though not mentioning details, which should be taken up and referred to the appropriate committee and the charges investigated. He took upon himself to do this, Mr. Speaker.

I would remind him that when there was what I considered to be conduct by a member of the government which did not reflect credit on that member, and which required his withdrawal from the cabinet, that action was taken at once. When my parliamentary assistant took action which I considered to be indiscreet, especially because of the position which he held as my assistant, within hours of learning of his action and intervention that parliamentary secretary resigned his position. When charges were made in this house which required an inquiry, that inquiry was initiated at once, Mr. Speaker.

While agreeing entirely with the right hon. gentleman, Mr. Speaker, in the necessity for maintaining the highest standards of morality and good conduct in government and in parliament, I deny with all the vigour I can the charge made by the right hon. gentleman that we are indifferent to this, and that we have not taken action in this matter. And if necessary we will take action in this matter in the future.

The right hon. gentleman took a good deal of pleasure, and his followers took even greater pleasure, at his new role of "Mr.