

● (1652)

The hon. member has in his possession documents of a top secret nature relating to the security of the state, affecting our relations with other countries, and he has already used those documents inside the House and outside the House. And the only thing which has been asked of him as a responsible member and as a good Canadian is to hand over those documents to the people to whom they belong, that is, to the RCMP.

Mr. Stevens: Because they are embarrassing to you.

Mr. Lalonde: I will not comment upon the rather lighthearted way in which the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) dealt with this issue except to say this: as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has indicated, what is required is not the consent of parliament, as such, but the consent of the Speaker before a search warrant can be enforced here. Since the right hon. gentleman was wrong on that point, I suspect the rest of his argument falls into the same category.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: I will give the right hon. gentleman one assurance, however. He says we want to get rid of the hon. member for Leeds. I can tell the right hon. gentleman that we do not need to try to get rid of the hon. member for Leeds or to try to get rid of any of the hon. members in the opposition. They seem to be doing very well themselves.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lalonde: This is a very serious issue indeed, and we on this side take it very seriously. It seems to me that since the hon. member claims he needs time to consult with a legal adviser, and since he claims that the time limit which has been given to him is too close in that respect, I would suggest for your consideration, Mr. Speaker, that the House might give thought to the following possibility—what is of concern, here, is the security of Canada—

Mr. Crosbie: Nonsense! The security of the government!

Mr. Lalonde: Some members across the way do not even seem to realize that those documents are extremely relevant to the security of Canada. If they do not see that—

Mr. Clark: We just have your word for that.

Mr. Lalonde: —they don't know what is relevant to the interests of this country. What are involved here are extremely important documents having to do with the security of the state. It is important that there be no destruction, no tampering, and no revelation of those documents to anyone not authorized to have access to them.

Mr. Clark: You have that guarantee from the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt). You had it earlier.

Privilege

Mr. Lalonde: I suggest that, while reserving our right to move a motion on this important issue, we should ask the hon. member for Leeds to hand over immediately to you, sir, as a guardian of the rights of this House, all the documents relating to this question that he has in his possession.

Mr. Dick: If he has any.

Mr. Lalonde: He said himself he had documents. The hon. member who sits next to the hon. member for Leeds does not seem to realize what the hon. member himself has said. I suggest he give those documents to you, sir, with a commitment that no copies are to be made and that the contents will not be revealed to anybody until the House has disposed of this issue.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: I must say I had myself intended to interpose just a few moments ago to make a similar suggestion. We are now approaching a practical solution to an interesting problem. I would remind the House we might very well find ourselves talking the subject through until Monday morning in which case the problem would be resolved after a fashion—I do not make this comment in an entirely facetious way.

I am disposed to try to find a solution. We have now reached a point at which five or six questions, each of them important from a parliamentary point of view, have been raised, and a great deal of study will be required before I can resolve any of those questions. It will certainly be difficult to do so by tomorrow at noon. It might very well take until Monday to come up with answers to some of the problems which have been raised. I do not want to gainsay the argument, but I believe the minister has put forward a proposal which meets the difficulty.

I assume, as did the minister, that there is an admission that some documents are in the hon. member's possession; I do not know whether that is in dispute. What I am saying is that I would prefer to have until Monday to consider these matters and reach conclusions about them. In the circumstances perhaps the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) might consider that he was well served and that the House was well served if I were to keep any documents he might have in his possession, over the week end. We might as well find out now whether that is the situation and, if it is, we can stop this discussion now and get on with the opposition motion. That would give me an opportunity to examine those questions which have been raised.

I might also say that while the arguments put forward are very interesting and complex, the position of the Speaker has not yet been fully tested in a way which would allow me to come down with a definitive decision. The hon. member for Leeds has been advised that certain steps might be taken. If they were taken, that would raise certain very interesting questions which have been dealt with in the past as questions of privilege. However, the fact that certain steps my be taken is not enough to constitute a basis for a ruling. The more serious question is: what happens if and when the moment