

even the government approved it or not, letters or memoranda written by senior officers or clerks to the governments of other countries be disclosed to the general public. Section (c) of the motion is in that category inasmuch as it calls for correspondence either through ministers of the crown or public office.

All authors agree that so long as any existing government retains the confidence of parliament, it is unsafe and unwise as a general principle to interfere with them in matters of administration, a proceeding which must tend to destroy the harmony which should exist between the different powers in the state, and to transfer the executive authority from the hands of responsible ministers into those of persons who have not been sworn in to administer the country's affairs.

This opinion is signed, "Arthur Beuchesne, Clerk of the House of Commons." I think it is a true and correct interpretation of the rules and practice of this house, and for that reason I feel that the motion cannot be accepted.

Mr. MacINNIS: Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege before you put the motion, I do not think anyone would expect the Prime Minister to refuse to agree to this motion without making a statement; I think that is the proper thing to do. But I do not think the Prime Minister should go beyond Beuchesne's rules and orders and obtain a written opinion from the Clerk. That is not in keeping with the dignity of this house and with the position of Clerk.

Mr. CHEVRIER: Where is the question of privilege?

Mr. MacINNIS: That is the question of privilege. We should not have to listen to a statement written by the Clerk. I have a high regard for the Clerk's understanding of the rules, but if the Prime Minister did not agree with his interpretation of the rules he would not accept it. Consequently he should cite the rule as it is in Beuchesne's rules and orders. I am in perfect agreement with the Prime Minister at the moment and if the motion is put to a vote I shall vote against it.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Answering my hon. friend on the question of privilege, if the Clerk of the House were not a recognized authority on the practice and rules of the house I would not have asked for an opinion from him. However, I know that many hon. gentlemen opposite take exception to practically everything I say, and I thought it was advisable in a matter of this kind—

Mr. MacINNIS: Not I.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am not referring to my hon. friend; I am referring to hon. gentlemen immediately opposite.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Mr. COLDWELL: May I ask the Prime Minister if we are entitled to go to the Clerk to get an opinion when we want one?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I assume that that is what hon. members are doing from time to time; in fact I know they are.

Mr. MacINNIS: We never read them out here.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: On a point of order, if as the Prime Minister has stated it is wrong for governments to ask the opinions of their senior officials and then submit them to parliament, is he not himself contravening and transgressing the very rule he enunciated a moment ago as being applicable to the House of Commons?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I say to my hon. friend that the Clerk of the House is an officer of the house, not an officer of the government.

Motion negatived on division.

#### LOMOND, ALTA., IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Mr. HANSELL:

For a copy of all letters, telegrams, correspondence, contracts, tenders, and any other documents in possession of the government during the past ten years with respect to any proposal for any irrigation scheme in the district of Lomond, Alberta.

#### UNITED KINGDOM

##### AGREEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO BEEF, BACON, CHEESE AND EGGS—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF COPIES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. JOHN BRACKEN (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. It has to do with the question I directed to his attention four weeks ago, to be found at page 1125 of *Hansard* of February 12. The question was: Will the minister table copies of the recent agreement concluded with the United Kingdom with respect to beef, bacon, cheese and eggs? The minister was willing to do so but I am advised that the documents have not yet been tabled. Can the minister have them tabled at once?

Right Hon. J. G. GARDINER (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I shall have them tabled just as soon as they are completely signed and in shape to be tabled. These documents have to pass back and forth between here and the British representatives, and I do not think they are all completely signed. At the moment they are in process of being signed.