

was read to the House on the 26th of May, and what is the alternative proposal which is referred to by the Minister of the Interior in that quotation? He speaks not only of this proposition, but of some alternative proposition that has not yet been laid before the House. Will the right hon. gentleman bring down that alternative proposition, or does he venture to say that no such alternative proposal was ever made? Why is it, when a minister of the Crown has made this reference to a public document, that that document was withheld—I was going to use the word concealed—from this parliament? My right hon. friend has referred to authorities. Let me refer him to the authority of Bourinot's Parliamentary Procedure, edited by the learned Clerk of this House, at page 366, where this principle is laid down—and let me say that this principle relates even to documents which are truly confidential. The principle is this:

If a minister cites any such document in the House, it becomes a public paper and should be produced.

Well, did not my hon. friend the Minister of the Interior in effect cite that document when he referred to that proposal, and did not the ex-minister of the Crown cite that document and refer to it still more distinctly? Let me point out further, on an authority which I think will be regarded by every hon. gentleman in this House, the practice of the English parliament, under which such a reference, made even by an ex-minister of the Crown, renders it necessary, as I understand the practice, that the document should be laid before the House. In the case of the Cagliari, which is referred to in volume 149 of the English 'Hansard,' at pages 177 and 178, a certain matter had been under consideration of a previous government, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in dealing with the question, pointed out that the government of which he was a member had taken it for granted that their predecessors had arrived at a certain conclusion which rendered action on the part of the incoming government absolutely unnecessary. Then speaking further on the question he said this:

But when the discussion took place on Friday night, the noble Lord, the member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston) rose and stated, in a manner most unexpected by us, that the late government were considering again the case of the Cagliari previous to their retirement from office.

Then he goes on to say that an examination of the documents does not seem to him to justify that. But he continues as follows:

We shall act without fear or favour, whether we may deem it our duty to recognize the jurisdiction of a sovereign, or to vindicate the rights of our fellow subjects. We have given direc-

Mr. R. L. BORDEN.

tions that all the papers connected, with the management of the Cagliari case by our predecessors should be prepared and laid with all reasonable despatch before parliament. They are more voluminous than the House perhaps imagines; but no unnecessary delay will take place in their production.

I may say that is one of the authorities Sir John Bourinot cited by for the principle that when a document is cited in this House by a minister of the Crown it becomes at once a public paper and should be produced. As I have already said, he is dealing there, not with documents of this character, which cannot be really confidential, but he is dealing with documents which are truly and in the accepted sense confidential documents, and which otherwise ought not to be produced to parliament.

But, let me refer my right hon. friend to another aspect of this question upon which I certainly think that some explanation is needed. My hon. friend from Hamilton (Mr. Barker) on the 30th of May, put this question to the government:

Mr. BARKER asked:

To what persons, on what dates, and under what circumstances, was the application of George A. Cox, Charles M. Hayes, and William Wainwright, read to the House by the Honourable the Finance Minister, on the morning of the 27th May, 1904, communicated wholly or in part previous to the same being so read to the House?

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). The application of Messrs. Cox, Hays and Wainwright, which was read on May 27, by the Minister of Finance, was communicated to the cabinet and to nobody else. As to the date, it is impossible to say at what date, but it was shortly after it had been received.

Now, some rather striking utterances were made by a certain very prominent gentleman on the other side of the House during the last session, which I think call for some explanation in connection with that statement of the right hon. gentleman. I refer to the utterances, among others, of the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton), whose absence we all regret from the House during the present session. That hon. gentleman took a very important part in the debate. He was put up by the government to reply to the Hon. Mr. Blair, ex-Minister of Railways and Canals, on the occasion when that gentleman made a most noteworthy speech in this House, in which he condemned unsparingly the policy of his colleagues in committing themselves and the country to this project. Therefore, the words of the hon. member for North Norfolk bore a certain semi-official import. He was referred to by the right hon. gentleman in terms of the highest commendation as the greatest authority on transportation in Canada, or in language to that effect. This hon. gentleman, speaking for the government in that regard, used this language, which is to be found at page 8493 of 'Hansard' on 1903: