

treating the House properly. Surely we have a right to complain, and I do complain, and I think my complaint is justified after what has passed.

When the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) asked for these papers—specified with the utmost particularity—how is it that on that occasion the right hon. gentleman knowing that this document was in existence, having in his mind—as he must have had in his mind at that moment—this very paper, knowing it was one of the documents that this side of the House wanted to see. Why was it that he did not then ask Mr. Hays's permission to produce it to the House? All he had to do, even according to his own view of it, was to send a telegram to Mr. Hays, saying: I am asked to produce all the papers relating to this transcontinental railway. Have you any objection to my producing your confidential letter?—and the permission would have been granted. But it did not suit hon. gentlemen opposite to produce it. It would have furnished an argument to this side of the House, it would have furnished information to the public of the utmost importance, somewhat adverse to the government scheme, but still of great value to this House, which desired to arrive at an intelligent judgment upon this matter. The hon. gentleman did not choose to ask permission to produce that document. It was only when it suited the Finance Minister to use it, when he thought it would give him some little advantage, that it was produced. The moment the Finance Minister wanted to use it, the right hon. gentleman stirred himself up and got permission. He could have got that permission just as readily before, and could have complied with the order of the House to produce every document and, as he himself said, without any equivocation. I point that out to the right hon. gentleman, and I think it requires some explanation from him. I say again, if he could get that consent so readily, when he wanted to use the paper, why did he not get that consent when he knew this House wanted the paper? The House had ordered him to produce the paper, and yet he would not ask permission of the only man apparently, whose consent was required.

Then knowing that the House wanted such a paper as that, knowing that it was an important document and that it was in his possession, why did the hon. gentleman go out of his way to use such particularly emphatic language as to say to the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk): I tell you without any equivocation at all that you have all the papers? A most extraordinary statement, surely. I have known hon. ministers to refuse to bring down papers in this House on the ground that the public interest required that they should not be produced; but I never yet heard a minister deny the possession of papers, and then use the fact that the public

Mr. BARKER.

interest was against their production as a reason for denying their existence.

The right hon. gentleman, in as plain terms as if he had said there was no such paper in existence, conveyed that to my hon. friend from Jacques Cartier. He was free to say that which he did not say: We have produced everything but confidential papers that we are not at liberty to produce. He did not choose to do that. He said, we have produced everything. Did any one ever hear of a minister of the Crown saying that he had produced every paper relating to a particular subject and when afterwards he was found in possession of a particular document saying: Oh, I did not produce that because it was against the public interest? Did the hon. gentleman qualify his language at the time by saying that he produced only the papers that the public were entitled to? The right hon. gentleman did not pursue that course. He had no trouble at all about plainly saying that he had produced everything. He put himself in the very awkward position that he practically denied having possession of any other documents than those which he produced. The hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) does not seem to have much trouble on that score. He says if you have a confidential document you are not only justified in not producing it but when you are asked a question about it you can ignore it. I think treating the matter in that way would put the hon. gentleman in a very equivocal position. I think it would be a great deal more straightforward on all such occasions for the hon. gentleman to say: I have a document of a confidential character which I am not at liberty to produce. If that had been done we would have known there were documents behind and we would have inquired as to the propriety of the non-production of them on that ground. But we were misled. We were led to suppose that there were no such documents. The hon. Minister of Finance gets over it by saying: You are entitled to ignore it; in effect you are entitled to say you have no such document because it is one that you ought not to produce. I do not think I am over-stating his language. I will give it exactly as he uttered it. He says at page 3837 of the unrevised 'Hansard':

—and I dispute the contention of the hon. member for Hamilton (Mr. Barker), that in bringing down a return or in answering a question in this House a minister is bound to take notice of any documents that are confidential. Such documents must be ignored.

That is the way that the hon. Minister of Finance puts it. In other words we can make you our answer as if no such document ever existed. Surely I need not argue that point. It is not arguable that such a thing can be proper. You may refuse to produce a document for special reasons, but to contend that you may ignore