

Point of Order—Mr. Nielsen

I say to the Hon. Member that reports by High Commissioners and Ambassadors to the Government, as the Hon. Member will perhaps learn after some time here, are not the type of documents customarily tabled in the House.

Mr. Stevens: You read from it.

Mr. Regan: I certainly did not read from it, whatsoever.

Mr. McDermid: You did so.

Mr. Regan: The Hon. Member can contend that I did. I am saying that I did not read from it.

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the Hon. Minister come to the point because, as I said before, it is past the hour.

Mr. Regan: I say to the Hon. Member that I believe the appropriate and prudent course for me in such a situation would be to bring his request to the attention of the Secretary of State for External Affairs—

Mr. McDermid: Wherever he is.

Mr. Regan:—who returns to Canada tomorrow.

Mr. Nielsen: Point of Order—

Madam Speaker: I will put an end to Question Period before I entertain a point of order in the way that I sometimes do when I have reports of petitions, and I certainly have some today.

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PETITIONS

TABLING OF REPORTS OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: With the exception of 11 petitions, I have the honour to report to the House that the petitions presented by Hon. Members yesterday meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form. Those who do not meet the requirements as to form are the following: two presented by the Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen), two presented by the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Patterson); two presented by the Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydminster (Mr. McKnight); one by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski); one by the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong); one by the Hon. Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers); one by the Hon. Member for Erie (Mr. Fretz); and one by the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson).

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POINTS OF ORDER

MR. NIELSEN—REFERENCE TO TELEX BY MR. REGAN

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I do not believe the Minister has the luxury of hiding the telex from the

High Commissioner to Barbados, which he is attempting to do. We all saw the Minister, in response to questions, quoting at some length from that telex, if he says—and we must accept his word in this House—that he was not reading from the document, he certainly referred to it at some considerable length. I would like to draw to the Chair's attention Citation 327 of the Fifth Edition of *Beauchesne* which stipulates that:

A Minister of the Crown is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House, unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table.

That is equated to the same rule of evidence in courts of law which requires production so as to enable all sides to a dispute to have all the evidence in order to come to a value judgment. Citation 326(2) reads:

It has been admitted that a document which has been cited ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interest.

It submit the public interest demands that all the facts be known since the lives of some 50 Canadians were placed in jeopardy by the Government's ineptness.

The other citation I wish to quote is to be found on page 103 of the same edition of *Beauchesne*.

● (1210)

It might be argued that a Minister must either cite or quote specifically from the document before that rule applies. I have made this argument previously in the last three and a half years, Madam Speaker, and I must say that I have not been too successful in the outcome. However, I maintain and so submit that this rule does come into play when a Minister of the Crown refers to a document in his hand as being an official communication, in this case from the High Commissioner in Barbados, and when he is seen by Hon. Members of the House while answering questions to be referring to the document.

I cannot say that the Minister was reading because he said that he was not and I must accept his word. However, he was seen by Hon. Members to be holding that document up. He was seen by Hon. Members to be quoting or citing at length from that telex which he held in his hand. In the observance of all Members, it is quite clear that he was at the very least referring to, if not reading from, that document. On the basis of the clear perception of Hon. Members who saw him doing this, I suggest that he is now under an obligation by virtue of our practices and precedents to table that document. He cannot seek refuge by the application of any fine and stringent interpretation of *Beauchesne*.

It would be gravely disappointing to us, Madam Speaker, if in response to this situation you were to say that the Minister has said that he did not read and therefore we cannot compel him to table a document, or that the document was not cited from because the Minister said he did not read it. We all clearly saw him do this. I submit, Madam Speaker, that if there ever was a clear case for the application of the practice of Ministers being required to table such documents, this is certainly the case.