

Point of Order—Mr. Nielsen

were, "public interest"—then he could take refuge, which he is doing, in the fact that it would not be in the public interest to release the document. He can take that refuge, but what a cop-out. If that document were to have been produced, it would have proven beyond any rational doubt that what he was doing was playing with smoke and mirrors when he was answering the questions from this side.

We cannot do anything about Ministers who lack courage or about a Government which is so obsessed with the doctrine of secrecy that it takes refuge in the doctrine of its being against the public interest or against the national security to release documents.

I suggest that the defence and the position of the Minister and the Government are absolute hogwash. They do not have the courage to produce the facts, to which Canadians are entitled, to show how inept and bungling they have been through the whole Grenada affair in ensuring that the safety of Canadians caught in that situation down there had not been cared for far sooner than it was. They have bungled. They have been incompetent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: That telex would prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that that is the case. I am sure that is the way it is viewed by the vast majority of Canadians throughout the country.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, you will recall that this matter arose as a result of the Minister's answering a question from me. I am not exactly clear at the moment why the Minister is refusing to table the document. Perhaps Mr. Speaker can help me in this regard. Is the Minister refusing to table the document because he now claims that he did not quote from it, or is the Minister refusing to table the document because he believes that it would, in one way or another, violate the public interest? If the Minister is claiming that he did not quote from the document—and I heard him say that at one point during his statement today—then the way to solve that question might well be for the Minister to show the document to the Speaker in confidence, since the Speaker is quite clearly sworn to secrecy. He could show the Speaker the document to satisfy the Speaker that in fact there is no quote in *Hansard* which was taken directly from one or the other of those two documents.

On the second question, I doubt very much anything can be done if the Minister determines that somehow or other it would be detrimental to the public interest to table the document. I happen to believe, as the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) stated, that the public interest would be better served in coming to reasonable conclusions about what took place in the days immediately preceding the invasion of Grenada if the documents that transmitted the information from our High Commissioner in Barbados could be made public.

However, in order to satisfy what I consider to be a requirement of the House as placed upon the Minister by the Speaker, I ask that the Minister of State for International Trade

(Mr. Regan) provide for the Speaker the documents in question so that the Speaker can satisfy himself that those documents were not quoted from, and I would be prepared to accept the Speaker's ruling in that regard, whatever it turned out to be.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I simply want to draw your attention to two citations in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition, namely citation 327 and particularly paragraphs (2) and (3), even though the entire citation makes for interesting reading. The explanations given by the Minister today and on an earlier occasion did answer fully the two questions raised by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans). First, the Minister denies having quoted from any telex whatsoever, since the three or four words to which he referred were in his personal notes. As he has already had an opportunity to explain and, secondly, even if we do not admit that he was quoting from that document, even if it were true, Beauchesne indicates that since it cannot be done without injury to the public interest, as the Minister stated, that is sufficient justification for you to prevent him from tabling the document.

As to the new practice suggested by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain, it is an insult to the honour of parliamentarians because we do have a well established principle in this House to the effect that, when a Member—particularly a Minister responsible—makes a statement and gives his word that such is the situation with respect to security or public interest, that is sufficient and ought not to be questioned. Therefore, it is not necessary to add to that practice the requirement that the word of a Minister be checked by the Speaker of the House, notwithstanding all our respect for the Chair. Citation 327 (2) reads simply, and I quote:

● (1520)

[*English*]

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.

Those are the key words. We do not admit that this document has been quoted by the Minister who, on the contrary, said that the three or four words that he used were from his personal notes. I quote Citation 327(3):

A public document referred to but not cited or quoted by a Minister need not be tabled.

Those two citations should be sufficient for the Chair to prevent the Minister from tabling the telex he talked about. Further, may I draw your attention to the argument made by my colleague, the Minister, who made a clear distinction between the two telexes. This should also be taken into consideration before you make your ruling.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I submit that a ruling is not necessary. Madam Speaker made the ruling that the document was one of those which should be tabled. The Minister shakes