

Mr. BENNETT: Just imagine anyone seeking to cover himself up with a statement such as that. Can anyone imagine it? The hon member for East Kootenay asked a question about a document, as he had a right to do, having ascertained that there was such a document, and a minister of the crown now says, quite calmly, "I don't know whether there is such a document."

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): The rule is as follows:

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. The same rule, however, cannot be held to apply to private letters or memoranda.

Mr. BENNETT: Why, of course not. Now we have the more beautiful sight of a minister of the crown asserting that there can be anything like a private communication between a member of the harbours board and Dreyfus and Company with respect to public business. Imagine that!

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): We have the more beautiful sight of the leader of the opposition agreeing with the member for East Kootenay.

Mr. BENNETT: That, Mr. Speaker, only illustrates the calibre of the ministry. Are there on the treasury benches men who are unable to understand that public business may transcend personal differences? Are there upon the treasury benches men who cannot understand that the public interest is paramount? I occupy a position in which I am placed by statute, and one of my duties is to do exactly what I am doing, to try to safeguard the liberties of parliament from encroachment by the government of the day. That is my duty. That is one of the difficulties of the position which I occupy, and I will discharge that duty whether it be on behalf of a member of the opposition or of any other party when there is tyrannical exercise of power on the part of the government by reason of a great majority, enabling the administration to destroy the liberties of this parliament, which have been secured in the manner we all know. When that happens it is my unfortunate duty to protest against such an encroachment upon the liberties of members of the house, and I propose to do it so long as I am here.

What is more, there is not a thoughtful member of this house, who, if he will take the time to consider it, will not realize what is meant by carrying into effect the suggestion of the Minister of Transport. Do you

realize, Mr. Speaker, where it ends, what the result of it is. Let the Minister of Justice read the rule which I intended to refer to and which was read by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie).

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): I have others.

Mr. BENNETT: Oh, there are others. I am familiar with them, because I have traversed them all. They are all on the record of Hansard in connection with the post office case. In the previous case in connection with the post office the Speaker had ruled that the documents should be brought down, and they were brought down, and they resulted in bringing a very unpleasant and unhappy picture before the House of Commons in connection with patronage.

I submit that before any hasty action is taken with respect to this matter the government should look very carefully into the authorities. They should look up those authorities before, with their majority, arriving at any such conclusion as has been suggested. You, Mr. Speaker, should not be too ready to agree to the suggestion made by the government that the documents in question should not be laid upon the table; for I am satisfied that they would be laid upon the table in any representative institution under the British flag, when it is remembered that, in the first place, we are dealing with a communication written by a member of a public body with respect to public business, addressed to a great firm of wheat dealers, and dealing with a matter of public concern. That is the first point. The second is that it has been referred to by a minister of the crown although he now says he has never seen it. I suggest that the sooner he sees it and tables it the better for the country, because any reference made to a document of that kind entitles every member to have an opportunity to see it. The minister cannot be at once the judge and the advocate. He cannot advocate a certain attitude of mind and then assert himself to be the judge whether it is in the public interest or not. The Prime Minister might, peradventure do that, but the minister cannot.

Right Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Minister of Justice): The rule to compel the production of papers is very clear indeed, as are all the comments under it. Standing order 51 provides:

Notices of motion for the production of papers which the member asking for the same intends to move without discussion, shall be