

Privilege—Mr. Cossitt

But as a member of Parliament he has a right to have answers to those questions. The people of his constituency will make a judgment as to whether or not those questions ought to be answered. They have made that election in favour of the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville who has been returned to this House on four separate occasions since 1972. The issue is not one of costs.

There has been an allegation by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville that the document does exist. There has been a statement from a parliamentary secretary that he does not know about it. Therefore I think the matter must be held in abeyance. But certainly no member of this House, whether it is the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville or any member representing any constituency in the country, can labour under that kind of burden with respect to his right as a member of Parliament to have answers to questions that he has posed. This must apply to all members; to the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) who asks an equal number of embarrassing questions of the government. He is the best questioner on the government side in terms of the numbers of questions he has on the order paper. He has that right to ask those questions, and both the hon. member for Vaudreuil and the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville have the right to answers.

I think there is a question of privilege. I want to reserve the right on behalf of the House to argue the point further, if it is necessary, to convince you of that, Madam Speaker. We cannot operate if that document exists. The first step with respect to dealing with the question of the authenticity of the document is to have that document affixed to today's *Hansard*. Then perhaps the investigation can begin by you, Madam Speaker, and by other officials.

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I rise simply for the purpose of making a suggestion. It seems to me that if this document exists—the one to which the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) has referred—and if it is an authentic document, then there is a pretty serious question of privilege. At the moment, he is the only one who has it. It seems to me that either the document should be appended to *Hansard* so that we can all see it—we have to follow that route because being a private member he cannot table it—or provision should be made for copies of the document to be supplied to Your Honour and to representatives of the parties so we can all see it.

As I say, we should have a chance to look at it so as to make a decision before we proceed. The suggestion made by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) that it be held in abeyance is a good one. I underline that by making the suggestion that the matter be held in abeyance until at least party representatives and the Chair have had a chance to see the document or copies of it.

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) twice on his question of privilege.

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, I simply want to confirm what my House leader has said. I have expressed my willing-

ness to make the document available and to have it appended to *Hansard*. I know that as a private member I cannot table anything, but if that procedure is acceptable to the Chair and to the House, I will be glad to make the document available to the Table at this time. The only other point I might make—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member cannot make another point.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, if we accepted as a matter of principle that private members table any document they want when they want, we would risk becoming submerged, and I believe that in this case I have every reason to object to the request of the hon. member to table papers which, more often than not, I am sure, would come close to being—I shall not use the expression I had in mind but everyone knows the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) and I am afraid that if I gave consent today on behalf of my party we would risk being flooded by an ocean of more or less relevant documents on his part.

Madam Speaker, I do not object if he wants to show the document to his friends. He is quite free to do so. This does not bother me, but as far as the House is concerned we are not here to examine every question raised by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville. There are already a great number of questions in his name on the order paper. My parliamentary secretary gave a very appropriate reply when he said that we are dealing with his questions on the same basis as any other query. A great many of the questions on the order paper are in his name. We do not complain about this. On the contrary, he is the one who complains and every time he does so we take the opportunity to remind him that we reply to a large number of his questions, even though they often refer to nearly every department.

We do not criticize him for the fact that these questions cost the taxpayers a lot of money. We could do so, Madam Speaker, but to be fair to the House as a whole, it is quite normal that when we try to provide answers, we also try to achieve some balance and use the time at our disposal to provide replies to the greatest number of members possible. However, the hon. member can be assured that as far as I am concerned and as far as the government, my parliamentary secretary and the public servants are concerned, no instruction has been given not to reply to the questions asked. On the contrary, instructions are to try to provide to the hon. member the most complete answers possible to as many questions as we can.

Having said this, I would like to refer to the fifth edition of *Beauchesne* concerning the very important issue of questions. On page 129 of the fifth edition, it is noted that there are two types of questions asked in the House. There are, of course, the oral questions which we all know and which are asked when