

I did attend the meeting to which the hon. gentleman has referred and that, in all material particulars, the information he has provided is accurate. What he has not said is that on three occasions questions were raised in this House based upon information that evidently had been obtained from a source that dealt with top secret documents.

The hon. gentleman does not deny the fact that he had within his possession, and has had within his possession since at least the time when he commenced questioning in the House, documents that were deemed to be top secret documents and confidential documents.

As Solicitor General that was of great concern to me. I indicated to the hon. gentleman, on a number of occasions, that instead of making public declarations relative to documents of that nature, he ought to communicate with me and deal with the nature of those documents and provide me with such information as would enhance the security of the nation. Until I saw the hon. gentleman in his office this morning at close to twelve o'clock, I had received no communication from him.

I had been advised by the security service that the document could be in his possession. I had no indication that it was in his possession. There was an indication that those documents were detrimental, that the information within those documents, the release of which could be made by the hon. gentleman, was detrimental to the security of the state. Therefore—

An hon. Member: That is your opinion.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, surely as the chief enforcement officer of the national security of this state I have to exercise my opinion on a number of occasions.

In this instance even the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) recognizes the sensitivity of the information that he was releasing. He knew of the sensitivity of the information that document contained. The document itself was not only essential in terms of its content but also essential in terms of the source of that particular document.

The nature of the document brought into play the provisions of the Official Secrets Act with which, I am sure, the hon. member is familiar. If he is not, then he is derelict because he ought to have become familiar with them. He was dealing with a document which was strictly indicated as being top secret. He knew that the release of any information within that document had to be contrary to the Official Secrets Act. Undoubtedly he has certain privileges in this House, Mr. Speaker, but surely not to the detriment of the national security of this state.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in order to take every precaution, I advised the Prime Minister, as I am obliged to do, of the nature of the information that presumably was in the hands of the hon. member for Leeds. I described to the hon. gentleman the options that were made available to the government in terms of what could happen.

Privilege

The document that I showed the hon. member for Leeds in complete confidentiality in order to solicit his co-operation, was a document prepared for me in terms of the options that could be taken. There was evidence indicating that there could very well be a breach of the Official Secrets Act, and it stated the remedies there were available in the event that the facts were proved. I did not choose to use any of those measures, Mr. Speaker, because I felt the hon. gentleman was a member of parliament, and my responsibility had to be to secure return of that document and to ascertain the source of the leak, if we might call it that, within the security service.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: In order to achieve that purpose, with the least publicity and the least inconvenience to any party, I approached the hon. member for Leeds after having asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to solicit the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) to encourage the hon. member for Leeds to provide me with that information for the purpose I have described. I was not successful. On three occasions when speaking to the hon. member for Leeds, I indicated to him that I was soliciting his co-operation. The information I was conveying to him was complete with the revelation of the information that had been made available for me in the hope that the hon. gentleman would see the folly of the resistance that he is engaging in that, to my mind, is detrimental to the operation and maintenance of the sovereignty of this country.

When I called the hon. gentleman from his office in the centre block, when I went there in order to confer with him further, I suggested to his secretary that she should locate him. She found him in the parliamentary restaurant. I would have preferred to have spoken to him in person because it was simply an extension of our previous conversation. The reason why I asked for a reply by four o'clock was because of the sensitivity of the information that was there and because of the initial reluctance which the hon. gentleman had indicated to me to return the document which he had received, so that I could ascertain the sources of the leak of that particular information.

I was preoccupied, Mr. Speaker, with the second purpose that I described, namely, to ascertain the nature of the leak and the origin of that leak. Surely the hon. gentleman recognizes that the source of that information is an essential ingredient of the corrective action that this government has to take in order to preserve our national security.

● (1522)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: I am fully aware of the preoccupation of the hon. gentleman. He asked me whether he could be put in jail. I said to him that there was no consideration of that. I assured him of that. There were alternatives described in the paper, for my purposes, in terms of information from legal sources. They were not, Mr. Speaker, meant for the hon. gentleman except