

technical character, ought to be placed before the House. It would be a very inconvenient practice for any hon. member to accept documents which he could not use in debate. Rather than accept them under that condition, it would be better for him to discuss the matter as it appeared on the surface, without the engineers' reports.

MR. TUPPER said he thought it was in the public interest that such reports should not be considered public property, because that would tend to restrict the expression of opinion of engineers in relation to the capacity of contractors to fulfil their contracts, which, becoming public, would be likely to bring into collision public officers holding very important positions and contractors who might subsequently be discharging the duties of contractors under them, and would thus prejudice the public service. He (Mr. Tupper) would have no objection to take the hon. member for Chateaugay into his confidence, as well as his leader. He would be quite willing, indeed, to place all the reports of the Engineers on those tenders in the hands of the leader of the Opposition, with the statement that, if, on their perusal, in consultation with so leading a member of the House as the hon. member for Chateaugay, he thought it would be wise to lay them before the House, he (Mr. Tupper) would accept his judgment and do so.

MR. HOLTON said he did not want to be understood as affirming that those papers ought to be brought down in all cases, or in this particular case. He did not know anything of the character of the report, whether it would be proper to bring it down or not; but he did say, that, when papers were demanded, Ministers must, on their own responsibility, decide as to the propriety of producing them. But his principal object, on the spur of the moment, was to protest against private communication of public papers being made, as was done in this case by an hon. Minister to an hon. member. It might be quite true that his hon. friend was the leader of one side of the House, but, after all, he was here simply as the member for Lambton. He had no priority of claim to the public records over the mem-

ber for Chateaugay, or any others; and, therefore, he (Mr. Holton) had taken the earliest moment to protest, on principle, against the partial, secret, confidential communication to a member of the House of public measures. They would, perhaps, have occasion to debate the matters to which those reports referred, and ought not to have their hands tied in any way. Therefore, he desired simply to proclaim what he conceived to be the true doctrine with regard to the matter. Hon. gentlemen must decide on their own responsibility what papers they would bring down.

MR. TUPPER said he ought to have added that, in acting as he had done, he was only reciprocating a courtesy which he had on more than one occasion received from his predecessor in the Public Works Department. If his hon. friend from Chateaugay would throw his mind back to what took place a few evenings ago, he would remember that the leader of the Opposition stated, in reference to these papers, that he had on more than one occasion submitted to gentlemen opposite reports of a somewhat similar description, and information which he did not think it desirable to lay on the table of the House. He (Mr. Tupper) had only followed this precedent.

MR. MACDOUGALL said he thought that this matter was of too great importance to permit of its being disposed of by a conversation across the House between a Minister who made the proposition and the leader of the Opposition. He thought that, where millions were involved, and where, by the law of the land, this House was to pronounce upon the contracts entered into by the Department of Public Works, hon. members should, at least, have the opportunity of knowing what had been done; because, as he understood it, these contracts did not take effect until they and the reports of the Department were laid on the table of the House for a certain period. Therefore it seemed to him it was their right and their duty, as members of Parliament, as trustees for the people, to have all the information material to the formation of a judgment upon the propriety of the action of the