

Mr. GRAYDON: That is why the rules provide that, where there is a confidential document, neither the minister nor anyone else must read from it. If I am to answer the question which the minister has now raised, I will say the answer is in the minister's hands. He himself admitted that it could not have been a confidential document; otherwise he himself should not have read from it. I realize the minister committed an error.

Mr. ILSLEY: I do not think I did.

Mr. GRAYDON: The minister for years has never been very good at admitting any errors.

Mr. ILSLEY: I do not admit one here.

Mr. GRAYDON: I am not going to press the matter because I do not think there is any particular point in it, though I still have my own ideas. The minister himself said, "if he had inadvertently stumbled". You do not stumble unless you have made some little mistake. Having added ground to the position he originally took, it seems to me that he weakened the first one. The more you add to your first argument, the weaker, I think, the original becomes. However, I do not say that we can afford to be too technical about these matters. But this comes within the purview of a policy which the government is pursuing far too often. Confidence is not being shown to the house to the degree to which we are entitled, and here is one of the examples. The minister himself will recall that only a few weeks ago we had another instance of it. I want to show the fallacy of all these arguments about public interest. A motion was made for the adoption of the report of the advisory committee on the civil service headed by Mr. H. J. Coon. With respect to the tabling of that committee's minutes and report the minister took a parallel position to the one he is now taking. The one case coming on top of the other, it seems to me that this house must rise up and object to the situation. On that particular occasion the minister pointed out that this, of course, was a confidential report; that it should not be tabled because it had all the elements of confidentiality.

Mr. GOLDING: The hon. member is referring now to a debate which has already taken place this session.

Mr. GRAYDON: Oh, well, now—

Mr. GOLDING: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. GRAYDON: I am going to start my own debate on this occasion and I am not going to worry about the one that has gone by. This has a direct bearing on this particular

[Mr. Ilesley.]

debate, or I would not have mentioned it. When this was submitted to the house the minister found he was not able to command the support even of all his own colleagues with respect to the vote on that particular occasion. But coming after that—and I think we may take the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) as an experienced parliamentarian; I have always regarded him as such, and I hold his knowledge of the house rules in high respect—when I asked him on June 11, 1943, about tabling the report of the national advisory committee on agriculture, having always felt that these reports should be tabled and that there was no breach of the public interest in tabling them, the Minister of Agriculture, when I asked "If the committee makes a report I suppose it could be tabled?" said, "I would think so." I heartily agree with that. That, coming on the heels of the Minister of Finance's position as taken only a couple of weeks before, seems to me to indicate how untenable his position is.

So far as this motion is concerned it is a parallel motion to that which has been up in the house before. In view of the principle involved, I think we as an opposition ought to take strong objection to a repetition of this attitude, if it is to be similar to that which was taken in respect of the advisory committee on civil service matters. On that occasion there could have been just two things the minister had in mind. Either the Coon report contained some kind of recommendation which the government was going to adopt and take credit for, or it contained recommendations of which the government would not avail themselves and which they did not want published so that the opposition or any other interested parties might use those recommendations in the house or out of it.

This motion, in my opinion, should be passed. I cannot see how the Minister of Finance can properly object. He has lost all his grounds for valid objection to the carrying of this motion, and I ask him to allow it to be adopted.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver Centre): On the point of order, may I suggest to the leader of the opposition that he is completely in error in his interpretation of the rules with respect to citing a document. If we refer to Beauchesne, third edition, marginal note 278, at page 111, we find:

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 Minister of Finance, when we discussed this point the other day, specifically said it was not in the public interest, so that