

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 20, 1953

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

CURRIE REPORT

REFERENCE TO RADIO BROADCAST BY
MR. KNOWLES

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of personal privilege. Last evening the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) participated in a broadcast outside the house about a matter being discussed in the house, namely the Currie report. I, of course, take no exception to that action. However, in the broadcast the hon. member used these words:

But at any rate may I also point out that the Prime Minister himself, back in 1945, received certain documents which he knew were stolen.

Mr. Fraser: What do you mean by that?

Mr. Knowles: The documents that Igor Gouzenko brought to him when he was minister of justice and he felt it in the interest of the state that use should be made of those documents even though he knew quite clearly whence they had come.

I do not doubt that the hon. gentleman's recollection of what took place in 1945 may have become a bit hazy, but that statement is quite untrue. I never at any time saw Igor Gouzenko nor his documents nor did I at any time have them in my possession. The whole story is related in quite some detail by the then prime minister in *Hansard* of March 18, 1946, starting at page 47. I will not take the time of the house to read it but any hon. member who wishes to refresh his memory about the complete details will find them enumerated there. In the report of the royal commission which was set up to inquire into that matter, in another long narrative of the facts he will also find the following paragraph at page 644:

Gouzenko, his wife and child, remained in apartment 6 for the rest of the night, under the care of the city police. There was a later caller at apartment 4 in the night but he retired in a short time without incident. On the morning of the 7th of September, Gouzenko was taken to the office of the R.C.M.P. where he turned over his documents, told his story and asked to be kept in protective custody as he feared for his safety and that of his wife and child.

My own personal recollection of the facts is that on the morning of the 6th of September—parliament was opening on that day—I did not go to the Justice building but came directly to the centre block here, and that when I arrived here my secretary reported to

me that a man with his wife had gone to him and asked to see me and had explained that he wanted to see me because he was from the Russian embassy and had some papers that he felt were of importance to the security of Canada. I answered that I could not see him, that we were maintaining friendly diplomatic relations with the Russian embassy and that I could not take any part in any quarrel between an employee in the embassy and his employers. I felt that that might become a rather serious international incident.

I communicated with the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs and told him what my attitude had been and that, unless I received directions from the government to act otherwise, that is the way I felt I should act; that my secretary had a story that he would tell the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs if he wished to hear it. I heard nothing more about it that day or until an incident that afterwards I found rather amusing. The high commissioner for the United Kingdom was having a reception out at Earncliffe. It was a fine day and he was receiving his guests on the lawn. I was standing chatting with him when the Russian ambassador came up to greet his host. I still stood there and we had a few minutes' conversation, in the course of which the high commissioner asked the ambassador—who, I gathered afterwards, used to do some fishing in the Ottawa river opposite Earncliffe—if he had done any fishing recently. The ambassador had not done any in the last few days, and he turned to me with a smile and said: "And what about Your Excellency? Did you find the fishing good today?" Well, I did not know that he was chaffing me about the possibility of information having been conveyed to me by someone from the embassy. But afterwards I came to the conclusion that perhaps my sense of humour was not as keen as was that of the ambassador.

It will be recalled that this man had tried on the 5th to tell his story, and had told his story to someone in a newspaper office, and had not been taken very seriously. He had tried that day, or on the 6th of September, to get someone to take his story seriously and had failed to do so. He had then asked—being apparently in real fear for his security—the occupant of apartment six in the apartment house where he had apartment four if he