

There is no doubt as to the parliamentary rule which requires a Minister of the Crown who refers to a public document in the House and upon it bases an argument or assertion. That document, if called for, must be produced. The principle involved in such a proceeding is so obvious and reasonable that there does not seem to be any room for argument. It is the principle established in courts of law which prevents counsel from quoting documents which have not been produced in evidence. It has however been held that a demand for production and filing of any document should be made immediately and not at a subsequent sitting of the House.

There is no Standing Order which governs the quoting of private communications and we are guided mainly by custom and precedents. I have no doubt in my mind as to the decision I would have rendered with regard to the portion of the letter which the honourable member for North Battleford read into the records on Wednesday last. The contents of that letter are so serious that unless the honourable member, as such member, assumed responsibility for it, then, as Speaker of the House, I would have asked the honourable member to lay the letter on the Table of the House or, alternatively, I would have sought the consent of the House that it should be laid on the Table. However, the honourable member took the proper course in laying the letter on the Table.

It will be noticed that in the letter there is a serious statement concerning an officer of the R.C.M.P., one of the Departments of Government, that it refers specifically to a function of Government of a most contentious and delicate character in these war years, namely, the question of internment, and by reason of the publication of the portion of letter in *Hansard*, it may be properly considered of the nature of a public document. That is all the more reason why it should have been laid on the Table and it might have been retained as a parliamentary paper.

It may not be, in other cases of a like nature, so easy to interpret the Rules of the House. For instance, an unsigned letter should not be read in the House. Mr. Speaker Lemieux so decided on the 16th May, 1928. Or, a member may desire to summarize information contained in a communication, but the member giving the summary must take the responsibility, as a member of this House, of the correctness of the information he or she seeks to give. If an honourable member proposes to read a communication in its entirety, or even a portion, without divulging the name and address of the sender and the member refuses to take the responsibility for the truth and accuracy of the contents, I am clearly of opinion that such a communication should be laid upon the Table, and, particularly, if so desired by any member of the House. In the present case I agree with the Prime Minister that an honourable member is not entitled to read from communications unless prepared to place them on the Table of the House. The principle upon which this is based is that where information is given to the House, the House itself is entitled to the same information as the honourable member who may quote the document.

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Mr. Casgrain, a Member of the King's Privy Council, presented,—Return to an Order of the House of February 26, 1941, for a Return showing:—

1. What acreage has been acquired for the Debart airport and military camp, (a) airport; (b) military camp?
2. From whom were such lands secured, stating, (a) the acreage from each party; (b) the prices asked by each party, (c) the amount paid or offered in payment?
3. What has been the total expenditures for drainage, stating, (a) the quantity of tile or drainage or sewer pipe purchased, (b) from whom such pipe was purchased and the delivered prices for each size?