

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may proceed to speak to the point of order.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I do wish to speak to the point of order by reason of the circumstances under which the minister took exception the other day to the passing of this motion. I have not his language before me at the moment, but I do not think he took the position then that he is taking to-day. He said to-day that his position was based on an agreement made between the representatives of the provinces and the Minister of Finance that the discussions would be held secret. May I point out to the minister two things. The motion does not call for the evidence taken in these discussions; it calls for a copy of the minutes and a report, I assume, of what was eventually decided. This would be the complete minutes. But the motion does not ask for a report of the discussion. I submit that this is a matter of public importance and that an alleged arrangement to keep that part secret could not possibly be binding on the House of Commons. The minister should not be in the position to make such an arrangement. It is not in the public interest that he should make such an arrangement. The minutes are merely a record of the decisions reached. The hon. member does not ask for the evidence; I would not ask for the evidence. But on a matter of such enormous importance as this I submit that the motion is in order and that any arrangement made that was without the jurisdiction of the minister is not binding on the House of Commons.

Mr. ILSLEY: Mr. Speaker, there was, so far as I know, no report made to anybody.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Then there will be nothing to bring down. That wipes that out.

Mr. ILSLEY: This motion can mean nothing unless it means that the stenographic report of the meeting, the minutes and the report, be produced. It was agreed that for the convenience of the press a statement would be given out at the conclusion of each day, and I assume that it is from one of those statements that the hon. member has been reading. I am not sure just what he has been reading from.

Mr. DORION: From the "Canadian Annual Review" for 1935 and 1936.

Mr. ILSLEY: That was no doubt based on the reports that were given to the press at the end of each day. I stated on a previous occasion that I would have no objection to producing those, but I assume that the hon.

member would not be satisfied with that because they are already public property.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That is all he is asking for, technically.

Mr. ILSLEY: His motion has no meaning unless it calls for the production of the stenographic report and the minutes, and that I am not at liberty to produce.

Mr. GRAYDON: If I may speak to the point of order, during the last discussion in connection with this matter, the point was raised, either by the hon. member for York-Sunbury or myself, as to the necessity of the minister laying upon the table of the house the report and the minutes which he had in his hand. He read from that report and those minutes a certain excerpt, and having done so, he was then, according to the rules of the house, under obligation to table the document. That is as many hon. members, I believe, interpret the rules. The minister then objected, and, adding another string to his bow, he said that if he had inadvertently stumbled into this position he wanted to object to the tabling of the document because, he said, it was not in the public interest.

Mr. ILSLEY: Neither it is.

Mr. GRAYDON: I have the *Hansard* reference here. The first ground he took was that of confidentiality; in other words, he contended that it, being a matter of agreement between those representing the provinces and the dominion, was not a producible document and should not be in the public hands. Then, after I had summoned to my aid the long experience and intimate knowledge of the rules of the Prime Minister, who on this occasion at any rate found himself in agreement with me, the Minister of Finance shifted his ground.

Mr. ILSLEY: No, I did not.

Mr. GRAYDON: Perhaps I should not say he shifted his ground, because one thing the Minister of Finance does not do is shift very far.

Mr. ILSLEY: I wish to ask the hon. member whether he thinks it is in the public interest to break agreements with provinces.

Mr. GRAYDON: The minister realizes that I cannot say there has been an agreement between the provinces and the dominion. But if my hon. friend wants to ask me that question, I will ask him if he does not think that he himself was breaking that very trust when he read part of that document.

Mr. ILSLEY: I certainly was not.