

deeper principle which is embodied in the traditions of British parliamentary democracy and, in fact, is even in written form as far as convention is concerned.

You, Madam Speaker, and the members of this House should be aware, if you are not, that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the Right Hon. member for Mount Royal, undertook in writing to the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. member for Yellowhead, as indeed did the previous holders of the office of Prime Minister of Canada to each successor as an administration changed between different political parties, to set up a system whereby certain reports, cabinet documentation and ministerial documents could only be released, indeed could only be shown to members of a new administration when certain procedures relating to representation by the previous administration could then take place.

This is an extremely serious matter where we have a member of the present administration not only referring to it but actually having that type of report, if it is the type of report I believe it to be, and the only way we can find that out is for the Chair to order the minister to table it, as under the rules of the House he should be required to do in any event. This is a very deep principle. Under these circumstances I want to reserve, on the part of my leader and members on this side of the House, the right to raise this question of privilege at a later date.

Madam Speaker: If I understand correctly, the hon. member is deferring the questions of privilege on the more fundamental matter. He is now asking for the minister to table the report to which he referred in the course of an answer during question period. According to our rules, a minister referring to a document is not obligated to table it unless he quotes from it.

Mr. Lawrence: He summarized it.

Madam Speaker: A summary can be interpreted as a reference to the document. Under our Standing Orders I have no authority to force the minister to table the document. That is up to the minister if he wishes to do so. I do take notice that the hon. member will raise a question of privilege at a later date on the more fundamental question.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, on this question of privilege which was just raised, I only want to say on a point of order without in any way—

Mr. Cosgrove: On a point of order—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member rose on a point of order and that is why I recognized him before recognizing the minister who, I presume, wants to reply to the hon. member for Durham-Northumberland (Mr. Lawrence). I can entertain a point of order before hearing the minister, and I hope it is a point of order.

Mr. MacKay: I think it is a point of order, Madam Speaker. If I understand what my colleague said, this was referred to as a "secret report". I have some knowledge of this report as I

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

was the minister for whom it was prepared. There was never any intention to keep it secret. Indeed, it was about to be released. I believe it is already public. This in no way undermines the argument of my colleague who pointed out very correctly the conventions and restrictions which have been agreed upon.

The minister in charge of housing was not only exaggerating when he referred to a secret nature, he failed to emphasize it was just a component of a policy we were studying at that point. To that extent, I hope he inadvertently misled the House. To refer to this document as if it were the be all and end all on housing policy is simply not true, and the minister knows that.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): To assist the House, Madam Speaker, I was indeed referring to the document referred to by the hon. member who spoke last. It is a document dated October 26, 1979. It came to my attention two days after assuming responsibility for this portfolio. It was published in the *Ottawa Journal* and has subsequently been discussed at length in many forms by the chairman who submitted the report, Mr. Matthews. It is commonly known as the Matthews report and is in wide circulation. My reference to it as a secret document was that it was prepared in October and not released by the government, but released by the press. I responded to it in a public way after it was brought to my attention in that fashion.

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, will the minister permit a question since it is obvious he is not going to exercise his prerogative and table the report. He did indicate it is a public report, and he did say it was a secret report. My colleague said in that respect the minister misled the House. Will he now tell the House what is the classification, if any, on the document?

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, before this matter is finally settled, either by the Chair or by the minister, I invite those who might look into it to study a similar incident not long ago, in 1957.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: I was only nine years old, Stanley.

Mr. Knowles: And you were smarter then than you are now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles: The then prime minister of the day, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, flourished what he called a secret report. I believe it had been prepared by Mitchell Sharp who, in those days, was a bureaucrat. It had to do with the economy. Because it was flourished and because the then prime minister was claiming that he had it, he was required to table it. It could be that he was required and it could be that he volunteered. Certainly I remember that it was tabled. When I went to the *Hansard* office to look at my remarks, I discovered that the top page, the page on which it had been marked "Secret and Confidential", had been torn off. Just a