

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

procedure. As for us, members from both sides of the House, yesterday and today we accept our responsibilities, we respect parliamentary procedure and we decide whether or not there is ground for privilege. We are the ones who will rule on the question of privilege, as it is our duty to do so.

Following the interventions that have been made, we realize it would be pernicious, unfortunate and ridiculous to establish a second body to inquire into facts that are already being investigated by a commission created by parliament itself. The argument of parallelism, of the parallel existence of two parliamentary bodies investigating the same matter, and possibly leading to contradictory reports, the principle of avoiding two parallel inquiries should, by itself, suffice to justify an intelligent act, that is to reject the motion before us. It is inconceivable, Mr. Speaker, that on the one hand parliament be allowed to ask judges to inquire into the activities of the RCMP and that on the other hand this same parliament say: "Yes, but we do not believe in that too much, and that may take time, so we will not take any chances, we will use parts of the evidence and set up a little committee composed of members from the various parties, and make our own little inquiry at the same time, and if our report comes out before the McDonald commission's report, well, let us just hope that it comes to the same conclusions as ours".

This shows, Mr. Speaker, the absurdity of this whole situation. It seems to me that Canadians are now faced with enough serious problems that they have a right to expect a much more responsible behaviour on the part of the members of this House than what has been shown since yesterday, especially among the Progressive Conservatives. It is this same Progressive Conservative party, Mr. Speaker, which was complaining that we were not proceeding quickly enough with the consideration of the motion to create the new department. It is at its insistence that we wanted to debate the motion yesterday, that we wanted to put it on yesterday's order paper. But it is also because of its attitude that we were prevented from doing so, because we had to debate a question of privilege which is not finished and which we are still discussing today, Mr. Speaker.

No doubt that the serious people watching us will come to two conclusions. First, that the Progressive Conservative party is wasting the time of the House and that of Canadians, because the government is ready to move on to other matters and, therefore, the Progressive Conservative party is not assuming its responsibilities and could not care less about the Canadian people; and second, that the Canadian public will have the opportunity to realize that the government has assumed its responsibilities. What the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham is complaining about, namely the illegal opening of the mail, is the subject of an inquiry just now, and the government certainly assumed its responsibilities when it set up this inquiry commission which is currently working very seriously, and which is empowered to call in as witnesses not only the people of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but

[Mr. Pinard.]

politicians, past and present solicitors general as well. A royal commission will soon make its report. Why ask it to duplicate the efforts of another institution and waste its time by studying the same facts simultaneously, as I said earlier?

Mr. Speaker, this in short is the situation I wanted to explain on behalf of the government and this is why we want to settle the matter, as provided in our parliamentary procedure, by voting against this motion to avoid a duplication of efforts, to avoid the danger of contradictory reports, to avoid bringing ridicule on this institution since it has already passed legislation to establish a royal commission which is doing its job and its duty, as well as to show some respect for the former solicitor general who has been subjected to all sorts of charges and suspicions. Moreover, as hon. members will have seen, I wanted in concluding my intervention to make a rectification and call to order certain irresponsible people who have publicly spread lies, rumours and misrepresentations of the facts, especially as on the first page of *Le Devoir* of today we can see the title "Member of parliament deliberately misled by Warren Allmand". Mr. Speaker, this shows a total lack of responsibility or complete ignorance of the facts. Mr. Speaker, I consider the person who gave such a title to this article a fool, a simpleton or an ignoramus. He has lost contact with reality, he shows no respect for the very clear observations that you made in your ruling yesterday, he is completely divorced from reality, he has falsified what has happened in the House of Commons and misled the Canadian public, and he should be reprimanded publicly as I am now doing, Mr. Speaker, in closing my comments on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham.

● (1532)

[English]

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I was just checking with the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert to see if he wanted to precede me but, if that is not the case, I will continue briefly.

I consider it a privilege to be able to take part in this debate. I must say that I am disappointed by the attitude of my fellow Nova Scotian, the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), who more and more frequently appears to intervene in the House and to use his great parliamentary talents in an attempt to restrict the activities of members of the House trying to uncover information.

I listened with great care to the speech made by the minister's parliamentary secretary, which I thought, if I may say so with all kindness, to be rather repetitious. It seemed to say, in effect, that what we should do is abandon our responsibilities as the House of Commons to the McDonald commission. Implicit in that was the question, to use his terms: what more democratic institution is there than the McDonald commission? That may very well be so, but I would have thought that the House is at least as important an institution, at least as democratic an institution, as the McDonald commission,