

development in the country could carry out his ministerial responsibilities in that province? If that is the rationale behind the establishment of that office and the justification for expending taxpayers' dollars, why is there not one in every province? I suggest that is where logic leads, unless logic compels us to the conclusion that the only reason for the existence of that office is political, as is the case with respect to constituency ministerial appointments in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

The city of Regina has such an office. The city of Whitehorse now, for the first time, has such an office, yet we do not even have a minister responsible for that constituency.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, you do.

Mr. Nielsen: No. We have a regional minister, and that is proper. We do not have a constituency minister, and therefore there is no rationale whatsoever and no logic for the establishment of that office. Yet it exists. Taxpayers are paying the rent and for the staffing. Taxpayers are paying for the person-years. For what purpose? For the first time in the almost 24 years I have been representing that constituency we now have two constituency offices. One is authorized by this House, and this House of Commons pays the rent and the salary. It has been there for the last eight years for the Member of Parliament to perform a service to his constituents. Now we have another one; we have a Liberal one called a ministerial office. It performs precisely the same function on the excuse, in a constituency where there are some 1,200 federal public servants, that somehow Yukon citizens lack access to the federal public service and to the federal executive.

● (1720)

The same situation exists in Yellowknife. I am not completely familiar with the circumstances there. The hon. member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) wants to address himself to the added dimension which exists in that territory. This must be given very careful consideration when we are discussing this matter.

Another reason the Prime Minister gave for establishing constituency ministers was that there would be a better flow from constituents to the executive because the ministers lived in those constituencies; they knew what it was all about; they were most closely related to the problems and the aspirations of the citizens or the electorate of the country who live in those constituencies. What utter rot!

The constituency minister who has the constituency office in Yukon comes from Hamilton. He has never lived in the north. Who is better able to represent the views of Yukon citizens to cabinet, to the executive and to this House than the person who has been elected and was elected to do those very things for the last 11 or 12 elections; I forget how many. It is a totally improper use of taxpayers' funds.

I have a further point which I wish to raise.

An hon. Member: Sit down.

Privilege—Mr. Rae

Mr. Nielsen: I am sorry I did not hear the intervention. My third point was the residency given as a justification or an excuse by the Prime Minister for following this totally new practice. Madam Speaker should consider the dimensions I have added. I have expanded the peripheral boundaries of the question originally raised by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood. If Madam Speaker does not consider these matters and rule upon them as part of the question raised by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood, then I will feel compelled to raise them as a matter of personal privilege. Because this practice of establishing constituency offices affects me directly, I feel compelled to raise the matter as a personal question of privilege. I say that they are establishing constituency offices and not ministerial offices, because they are performing the exact functions of constituency offices.

The hon. member for Edmonton East or the former minister responsible for fitness and amateur sport—

Mr. McCain: Fun and games.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, fun and games.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton North (Mr. Paproski).

Mr. Nielsen: I thank the Chair. That is where the constituency office is located. I do not know where the one in Regina is located, but I believe there is one there. I know where the one in Yukon is located, but I do not know where the one is located in Western Arctic.

My questions on the Order Paper ask the government for information which we never get for months and months—sometimes years. I asked how many other constituency offices similar to these have been established throughout the country. Will all these constituency ministers have the right to establish constituency offices in all these constituencies?

I see the President of the Treasury Board smiling, or is he groaning? They have done it in Yukon and Western Arctic. They will do it in Nunatsiag. I understand they have done it in Vancouver, Edmonton and Regina. Where else have they done it? How much further do they intend to go? This is a prostitution of the process that brought us here.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: I hear more groans. If we were to follow this new concept of the Prime Minister, in his attempt to justify the establishment of constituency ministers, what is the purpose of going through an election to elect Members of Parliament? We might as well not go through that process at all.

Mr. Knowles: Don't suggest that.

Mr. Nielsen: As I have suggested before, what they would really like to do, because they regard this place as a nuisance, is to do what was done in Ghana. A few very short months after democratic government was established there, they decided to abolish the opposition because it was a nuisance. That is my fear as to the direction in which we are headed