

*The Address—Mr. Nielsen*

to have some of them going on in the Yukon. Last but not least, we criticized the project of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for the national historic park in Quebec City, to cost \$16 million, making a total of \$581 million, if I am correct in my figures. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) may wish to correct me.

• (2140)

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** You are not correct.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I could be incorrect. I am not mentioning the \$2 billion of the unemployment insurance fund, or the "big rip-off", after the book of the same name, LIP or the OFY grants in the city of Toronto. I am just citing these instances to illustrate that we are not zeroing in with criticism in one particular province. It is not fair, it is not correct and it contributes to national disunity to charge this party with zeroing in on one particular province.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nielsen:** I say that to announce this kind of thing six days before the vote is taken is a deliberate, preplanned effort by the Liberal party to get votes. The people of Canada were not snowed; they were not snowed in Toronto and they were not snowed in British Columbia where the announcements were made. The people reacted like honest Canadian citizens and rejected the Liberals, but not for racial reasons.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hees:** They are just no good.

**Mr. Baldwin:** They are incompetent, that's all.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The new Minister of Transport says that the people of Quebec did not understand. But the English speaking people of Montreal island understood and voted heavily in favour of the minister's party, so this cannot be attributed to them. Hon. members on this side of the House take a back seat to no one as strong supporters of national unity in this country. The Prime Minister smiles and takes his Buddha stance now. But I do not want to get holier than thou—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** The halo is slipping down over your nose.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I did not serve my country from 1942 to 1952 in the armed forces to listen to somebody accuse me of being against national unity. I did not fight to see that happen in this country, and I will exert every ounce of my energy to see that it does not happen. That is one of the reasons I am here.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nielsen:** I am not here to see the Prime Minister stand as he did today and lecture us on constitutional law. I remember another occasion when he trotted out the same precedents. He was a freshman minister of justice when the government was defeated on a tax measure in 1968.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

**Mr. Trudeau:** In February.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I remember it very vividly because I had to leave in haste to attend a PTA meeting at Vincent Massey school in Ottawa. It was one of the two votes that defeated the government of that day.

The Prime Minister, as the then minister of justice, maintained the position that he does today, that really a tax measure is unimportant with respect to whether or not the government is defeated. What he said then, he says today—that it is up to the government to decide when it is defeated. If I may paraphrase his remarks, he says that if the government is defeated on basic principles it will go to the people, but if other questions go against them it will not be deemed a defeat. Who is the Prime Minister to decide what will be a question of principle?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nielsen:** There are some who say that hon. members on the other side of the House have lost their arrogance, that they are now humble, yet we have the Prime Minister saying the same thing that he said in 1968. At that time he said, in effect, "We are the masters. We will decide what issues will defeat us. We will decide when the government steps down". What supreme arrogance, Sir.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nielsen:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) had a good deal to say during that debate and it will be interesting to see how he now stomachs the following remark which the Prime Minister made in 1968. During the debate on February 27, 1968, as reported at page 7040 of *Hansard* the Prime Minister said:

A general election is an instrument given to the government to demonstrate that it has control over and the confidence of the Houses.

I say, Sir, that a general election is not an instrument given to the government; a general election is an instrument given to the majority of the members of this House, and if the government is defeated on a matter, our constitution requires that the government should step down. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre intervened in the debate at that point as follows:

May I ask the minister a question? Was I not asking for that position to be stated before the vote was taken, not after the vote had been taken and the government had lost?

He was cheered for that. The then minister of justice answered:

Mr. Speaker, I submit that this is not the case. These are the rules of parliament. They have been quoted at length by the hon. member and they are quite clear. The difference between the argument put forward by the hon. member and my own position is that the hon. member wishes to be on the side of those who decide if the defeat of a specific bill is the defeat of the government. That is the difference. We say we will decide if the defeat of a specific bill is the defeat of the government.

According to the Prime Minister, that applies today as it did then, whether the decision is taken before or after the vote will be decided by the government. What supreme arrogance. Here is what he said on that occasion, as reported at page 7042 of *Hansard*: