

Mr. Nielsen: Let me give one educated guess for the benefit of the hon. member. The hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi during his so-called contribution to this debate spoke about trained seals. I might remind the hon. member that those members over there are precisely that, sir. They are trained seals. There is not an honest, independent initiative among all government backbenchers, no matter how important the matter is to parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: The hon. member opposite claps. Let me remind him of what his leader, the Prime Minister of this country, said of Liberal backbenchers in the days when he was not in this place. He described members like the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi as trained donkeys seeing how fast they could get to the trough. That is a paraphrase but it is damned accurate in respect of the Prime Minister's words.

An hon. Member: He didn't say that.

Mr. Nielsen: He said that. He did not say it since he became Prime Minister but when he was a member of the NDP.

An hon. Member: He said that before he saw the light.

Mr. Nielsen: I wonder what light they see over there that blinds them to the natural course this parliament should be taking on this issue.

Let us consider the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) who used to be the minister of justice as well. Not only was he the minister of justice, he was the dean of the law school in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

An hon. Member: Does that bother you?

Mr. Nielsen: It doesn't bother me at all. What bothers me is that students who went to that law school to learn the fundamental principles of law were subject to the influence of the kind of thinking to which the Minister of Transport is prone.

I can remember an occasion here in the House when we considered a statute which said in one of its clauses that payments "shall" be made to wheat farmers on a specific date. The Minister of Transport stood in his place and argued—I think he argued sincerely—that the word "shall" could be construed to mean "maybe". That is exactly what happened and the government held up those payments to the wheat farmers even though the statute said implicitly that they had to be made.

I remember the present Prime Minister standing up in the House, in February, I think, of 1968, when we defeated the government by two votes on a money measure, arguing that this really was not a lack of confidence and the government had every right to subsist and survive. He also used to be a law professor at a notable university in Montreal. No wonder we say that hon. members over there do not understand this place. They cling to power like a cat clinging to the hide of the Canadian people, whatever the cost.

An hon. Member: What do the Canadian people say, Erik?

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

Mr. Nielsen: I think the Canadian people are pretty disgusted. The hon. member opposite reminds me of Bryce Mackasey. I forget his riding, whichever one it was he represented from time to time—Verdun at one time, and a recent attempt at Ottawa Centre. He always tried to portray himself as the man going to work with a lunch bucket. The hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi thinks he is the only member of this House who has an understanding of what he calls the common, ordinary man in the street. I have news for him. There are other members of this House, on all sides, who are just as keenly aware of the guy who uses a wrench as that hon. member. He asks me what the Canadian people think. I would presume that what the Canadian people think is that those members over there are trammelling the rights of parliament. If the President of Privy Council were to have his way, we would have the gag rule. If the Minister of Transport had his way, it would be the gag rule, and that is the fact.

An hon. Member: The people seem to be happy in my riding.

Mr. Nielsen: I have lived in the hon. member's province for quite some time.

An hon. Member: It doesn't show.

Mr. Nielsen: I am sorry if it does not show. I went to university in the hon. member's neighbouring province and I lived in that area of the country for six years.

An hon. Member: You better go back and refresh yourself.

Mr. Nielsen: I wonder if the hon. member has ever been to the Yukon. Let me tell him that I have lived permanently in every province and territory in the country, and I do not think that is a statement he can make. As a result, I think I am just as keenly aware of the feelings of Canadians as he is.

Canadians are going to get the impression from this debate and the exposure the question is receiving that the government, through the former solicitor general, is misleading members of this House. The Minister of Transport would like to see the debate terminated. He said the debate was closed and that this was a political attack. I have already given members the wiretapping example. It seems to me that if government members vote against this motion—

An hon. Member: We will.

Mr. Nielsen: The hon. member says they will. The phrase immediately leaps to my mind: My mind is made up; don't confuse me with the facts. Hon. members opposite do not want the facts because they are embarrassing. This is yet another example of their total lack of regard for this place, and an example of the extremely low regard in which they hold the parliamentary process, the subject matter of the debate here last Tuesday.

● (2042)

I am really disappointed. I have sat here several years listening to the President of Privy Council. Usually I have a