

*The Budget—Mr. Nielsen*

mation from cabinet ministers, must wonder what this institution is all about. We get half-answers, answers that some people would describe in even broader terms. We get no answers. We get answers that are misleading. We get answers that duck and weave every step of the way. One has only to refer to this afternoon's session to hear questions that have been put to ministers by opposition members throughout the previous four years.

What has happened to parliament? What has happened to the committee system? I am a member of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The chairman of that committee is not here tonight, but the committee usually meets on Tuesday and Thursdays and has a deadline by which to pass the estimates.

**Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo):** You are never there.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo (Mr. Marchand) says that I am never there, but he knows that is not true. As far as the hon. member is concerned, that is a matter in connection with which he can require me to put up my seat because it is a direct charge that he knows is not true. He knows very well that I am a regular attender of that committee and that I contribute very substantially to its deliberations. But when does this committee meet? It should be meeting regularly twice a week, but it is not.

**Mr. Goyer:** Are you referring to privileges and elections?

**Mr. Nielsen:** I am speaking of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. If the Solicitor General (Mr. Goyer) has any useful and meaningful contribution to make to this debate, I invite him immediately to get to his feet and make that contribution. However, I very much doubt that he will. He has made no useful contribution as yet as a member of the cabinet and I doubt that he will make any useful contribution for the short time he has left at his disposal as a member of the cabinet. The only thing the minister has done so far is to set up his "gumshoe corps", his so-called security planning and research group. What has this so-called group done? Of whom is it composed? How many people are in the group? What is it doing? All these questions we ask of him in the House; we ask questions of him in committee. But we get no answers.

**Mr. Goyer:** Related to wheat problems.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I would not doubt that a bit. That is the only reason the government has for setting up such a force—to look after internal security in the growing of wheat. Certainly there is no other reason for setting up such a body and replacing a hitherto legitimate and perfectly efficiently performed function on the part of the RCMP.

So we have a committee system today which in 1968 the Prime Minister assured the country was going to be reformed to enable it to operate more efficiently. And committees do not even meet. When committees bring down reports the government pays no attention to them; the reports are ignored. All these committees, with the

[Mr. Nielsen.]

possible exception of the saw-off in the public accounts committee, have a majority of Liberal members and all decisions are of course made by that majority. Even the procedures within the committees are decided by the majority.

Every member in committee is limited to five minutes to speak his piece; he is then cut off by the chairman. Either that or the chairman runs interference when government officials are being questioned. So what earthly use is a committee system that has now degenerated to the point of absolute uselessness? Nothing is done in committee. The estimates have been taken away from the House, where they used to be given fair debate, and salted away in committee where they are never heard of again. All this under the guise of so-called participatory democracy. That arm of parliament has been completely destroyed.

It now appears that it is unparliamentary for the leader of the New Democratic Party—and I can cite other examples on this side of the House—to use the expression, as he did today, "gouging". The hon. member was referring to Bell Telephone gouging the people of Canada, though I do not myself necessarily subscribe to that view. That was called procedurally incorrect.

• (2130)

We have a Prime Minister who can use obscenities and swear words in the House, and this is perfectly all right. But suddenly it is wrong for opposition members to use descriptive adjectives. I can recall the time when this was the very essence of debate. But suddenly it has become wrong under the rule changes which were imposed upon us by a government with an insatiable lust for power. The opportunism of the Minister of Agriculture is a prime example of what I am referring to.

In the Yukon there have been repeated demands for reform of government institutions for a dozen years. For three successive years representatives of the people there have been asking for government reform. Acting unilaterally, and without the approval of the House of Commons, this arbitrary Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) decided to change the structure which had existed for years—not that it was necessarily a good system—and experiment. The north is a greater experiment in state socialism than people in southern Canada could believe. If they could see it, they would not believe it. It is worse than the colonialism which existed in this country 100 years ago.

The Minister of Indian Affairs, with the approval of the Prime Minister, made it even worse by setting up within the bureaucracy what he was pleased to call an executive committee consisting of three civil servants taking instruction from the minister, and two elected members of council—a committee of five predominated by the civil service majority. I criticized the minister at that time. I told him it would not work. I knew it would not work.

At the end of the last session, matters reached a point at which 250 citizens in Whitehorse, where the council meetings were being held, crowded into the corridors leading to the council chamber, booing, catcalling and clamouring for the resignation of the council. Almost 5,000 citizens in the Yukon, almost 60 per cent of those eligible to vote in the last federal election in 1968, sent a petition to the