

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

---

Tuesday, October 29, 1963

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

### PRIVILEGE

MR. NIELSEN—ANSWER TO STARRED QUESTION  
ON ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon):** I rise on a question of privilege which affects all members of this house. It concerns the veracity of returns and statements made by two occupants of the treasury benches. I regret very much that I have to refer to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, because hitherto he has always appeared to me to be forthright. However, I am afraid the evidence I have on this matter is uncontrovertible. What I have to say affects also the minister of northern affairs in connection with a return he made to my notice of motion for the production of papers, No. 64.

However, my question of privilege affects more directly the Secretary of State for External Affairs in relation to my starred question, No. 1,235, which appeared on the order paper on October 4. It was answered by the hon. gentleman on October 21. In order to lay the groundwork for my question of privilege I have to read from starred question No. 1,235, as follows:

Has the government of Canada or any official or employee of the government had any consultations with either the government of the province of British Columbia or with the government of the United States of America or with any official or employee of either of the said governments with respect to (a) the maintenance or paving of the Alaska highway?

The question continues but what follows is not relevant to my question of privilege. The answer given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs on October 21 was as follows:

There have been no recent negotiations between the governments of Canada and the United States on any of the five subjects mentioned in the question although there have been some informal and inconclusive discussions with regard to the Haines cut-off highway.

The remainder of the answer is irrelevant to the point I am making.

I have, Mr. Speaker, a letter dated October 3, 1963, from the officer in charge of Canadian affairs, department of state, Washington, which letter reads in part as follows:

Discussions have also been held in the past with officials of the Canadian government and have revealed that, in Canadian thinking, paving of the Canadian portion of the Alaska highway has quite low priority, owing to the limited economic benefit which would be derived for Canada relative to the cost. In their view, Canadian funds would be more profitably expended on other highway projects in Canada, some of which might also be of more immediate benefit to Alaska than paving the Alaska highway.

Following a recent report of an alleged renewed interest on the part of the Canadian Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Arthur Laing, the department requested the embassy in Ottawa to seek clarification from responsible Canadian officials. Upon inquiry the embassy learned that the story was apparently based on a passing comment to a reporter and was not an official statement.

The letter goes on to say:

The embassy has been informed that this statement reflects the official position of the Canadian government. This would seem to indicate that no change in the Canadian government's views has occurred.

My question of privilege is that the answer given to me by the Secretary of State for External Affairs is false if we are to believe the information in this letter dated October 3, 1963, which was well before the minister gave his answer to me in the house. The letter is signed by Delmar R. Carlson, officer in charge, Canadian affairs, department of state, Washington.

I think the house must either have this matter satisfactorily explained by the minister or must accept the conclusion that there has been deception in the minister's reply.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure my hon. friend will agree there has been no deception. If there has been wrong information given, that will be corrected. I shall look into this matter at once, but I assure my hon. friend that the answer I gave was the answer that I believed the circumstances warranted. However, I will be glad to examine what my hon. friend has said in relation to the answer given and to the facts as I am informed of their existence. I shall be glad to look into the matter.

**Mr. Nielsen:** May I say a brief word in conclusion on the question of privilege and by way of reply. It seems to me again, Mr. Speaker, that we must get proper answers to the questions we ask. I should not have to go through the department of state in