

An hon. Member: Oh, come off it.

Mr. Nielsen: The Minister of State (Mr. Mahoney), the hon. member for Calgary South who has at least one supporter behind him, received his kudos and his portfolio as a result of the tremendous task he accomplished in piloting the tax reform legislation through the House of Commons. What does he say when he is asked questions? He was asked a question this morning about a critical situation facing Canada in respect of the price of gold. This knowledgeable and usually informative Minister of State for nothing, said nothing. I think interjections by him, both in his previous position and his position at this time, are very ill-timed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mahoney: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member should mention that the principal reason he did not receive an answer was that the Speaker would not allow me to answer because his questions were out of order.

Mr. Nielsen: When ministers over there are embarrassed, as they usually are, by questions from this side of the House they take refuge in assuming the mantle of the Speaker and either call our questions hypothetical or out of order. The truth of the matter is that the minister was not up to date on the current situation and knew nothing about it. If he did, which is very unlikely, he did not have any intention of informing the House about it, which is par for the course for these ministers.

The Minister of Agriculture is right in suggesting I know nothing about wheat. I have sat during debates in this House when the majority of members of the other side were not here.

Mr. Cullen: You haven't been around very often.

Mr. Nielsen: The only time the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth has anything to say is from the seat of his pants on the backbench over there. If he wants to contribute, why does he not urge other backbenchers to encourage the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to let them express a free opinion, instead of—

Mr. Gibson: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. I can only say to the hon. member that perhaps my speeches have not been the greatest in this House, but I have made about 50 while my hon. friend has been absent from the House, practically the whole session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. There is no point of order.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I will not grace that interjection with the legality of a point of order. All the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth has to do is compare the column inches of *Hansard* to see whether or not I have made more of a contribution than he has. The argument is often used—

• (2120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I have listened to all hon. members, but I would ask the

The Budget—Mr. Nielsen

hon. member who has the floor to continue his remarks on the budget debate.

Mr. Gibson: Just wait till we have the election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. I am sure the hon. member knows what I mean by having order in the House.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I have not really noticed any disorder in the House. The interjections that I have heard from the opposite side of the House are no worse than those usually coming from that side, and are no more inane than is usually the case. When I hear comments about voting and arguments of the sort that the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth likes to dredge up, from a pretty empty barrel of interjections I might say, all I have to do is look at the attendance record of the former hon. member for, I believe, Ottawa West who is now in the other place. That hon. member has been a very distinguished member of the House for many years and in the last session he had a 100 per cent attendance record, yet he had only four column inches in *Hansard* compared with two pages of my own. So I do not think I have to put my record on the line with anybody else's, least of all with that of the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth, whose estimate of having participated 50 times in debates is an exaggeration to say the least.

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to the hon. member for Ottawa West, which is my seat. I do not quite understand his reference and I am wondering whether that is what he intended.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to confuse the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) with the hon. member who was promoted to the other place, though the hon. member for Ottawa West might entertain some ambitions about following him, in which case I give him my sincere wishes.

To get back to the comments of the Minister of Agriculture about wheat sales, if ever there was a bigger horn to blow he certainly took second place to no one tonight, because he was really blowing. Even one as ignorant as I am about wheat knows—and not one of the few farmers on the other side will gainsay me this—that the reason for wheat sales is not super salesmanship on the part of anyone in this government, or in the last one for that matter. The reason for our wheat sales is that Alvin Hamilton and the Diefenbaker government passed the Export Credits Insurance Act which permitted credit to be granted to potential purchasers of wheat. Hon. members opposite, at least the knowledgeable ones, know the truth of that statement.

The Minister of Agriculture speaks of distortion. Even to a mind as ignorant as mine on the subject of wheat his remarks today can only be described as downright misleading, because they simply are not true. This being the budget debate, it is only fair ball that we should expose some of the weaving, ducking and avoiding that the treasury benches have been treating this parliament to over the last four years. Anyone who watches from the public galleries the operation of this House during question period, when opposition members are trying to get infor-