Yukon and N.W.T. Government

Mr. Dinsdale: I was surprised to see the westerners applauding that.

Mr. Orange: He is not speaking for the government; he is speaking for himself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) on a question of privilege.

● (4:20 p.m.)

Mr. Nielsen: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I was not endeavouring to be partisan but merely to point out—and I am sure the minister believes me—that all the Liberals and the Conservatives on the council are unanimous on the question of this resolution.

Mr. Chrétien: I was not referring to the hon. member's partisan approach; I was referring to something the hon. member for Brandon-Souris raised. He mentioned the speech made last Sunday by one of my colleagues. Expressing such views is a liberty which we in the Liberal party enjoy, and we are proud of it.

Mr. Dinsdale: There really was not any response from the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, it does not follow from the fact that the Territorial Council passed that resolution that the government had to accept it, because one should not confuse provincial status with democracy. According to the policy we advocated last week, an important step forward was made towards the establishment of a more responsible government in the Yukon.

We are going in the right direction. One may wonder why the executive power is not granted to the representatives of the Territorial Council.

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: No, Mr. Speaker. If we are to say the executive committee is to be comprised of three civil servants and that one elected member is to be invited to serve on the committee, how can the minister interpret this as executive power residing in the council?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I will cover that point in a few minutes when I talk about the executive committee I am forming. We must not confuse democracy with provincial status. There are some people who are elected in the Yukon, and they are elected to do a certain job.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

Mr. Nielsen: En français!

Mr. Chrétien: I can speak in both languages. As I say, they are elected to do a certain job. They pass legislation and have occasion to vote on the budget. Not only do they discuss the budget with the commission, but they perform their role in the same way that a Member of Parliament performs his role in the House. They fight their cases similarly.

Because the Yukon contains a small population in a vast territory, the people of the Yukon cannot generate enough revenue to run their own affairs. Even if the Yukon was a province of the same status as other provinces in Canada and was taking part in the same shared-cost programs, equalization payments, and so on, it would be in a position to obtain only $12 million. On the other hand, we are spending in the Yukon right now, under the heading of expenditures similar to those made in the provinces, more than $32 million.

Mr. Nielsen: That is a disgrace.

Mr. Dinsdale: This is the "igloo to igloo" philosophy.

Mr. Chrétien: Those expenditures come under provincial headings and do not include federal types of expenditure for things like transportation, resource development, and so on.

Mr. Nielsen: That is a distortion by the minister's officials.

An hon. Member: Nonsense.

Mr. Nielsen: It is not nonsense.

Mr. Chrétien: As a result of representations made to me, and discussions—and more than once I have discussed this matter with the hon. member for Yukon—I decided to take a step forward and form an executive committee. On that committee three people will be appointed by the federal government and one by the elected members. This is true, and I do not deny it; but I hope it will be a first step. It is important to consider who will be chosen by the elected members, because he will be a member of the executive committee. On an executive committee numbers are not important; the quality of the representative is important. If he has a valid case to present—and I shall appoint only those whom I think have judgment—he will be able to bring his case forward in the Assembly and I will be in