

*Privilege—Mr. Lawrence*

conduct a parallel inquiry in the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections of this House, because the McDonald commission already is determining these matters. I suggest they fail to appreciate the nub of the question of privilege raised, that members of parliament have been misled by the government.

I sympathize with the remarks of Mr. Speaker today when he commented respecting the treatment which the procedure of this place was accorded in the press yesterday. According to the blues, Mr. Speaker said, "As a matter of fact, one of the unique points that I made was that we were not, as had sometimes been done in the past, holding the minister accountable in this process but that we were going around the minister to deal with his official."

● (2012)

With the greatest of respect, I do not share the view of Mr. Speaker when he made those remarks. Because we are dealing with the government and a minister of that government whose reply in a letter to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence) binds that government in a situation where there was a deliberate misleading of the House.

**Mr. Boulanger:** You mean one paragraph of the letter.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I do not care whether it is one paragraph or two words, it makes no difference.

**Mr. Boulanger:** It makes a big difference.

**Mr. Nielsen:** If the Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen)—of whom I will have something more to say in a moment—were shot to death, for example, and I were on trial for his murder—and God knows, sometimes it is difficult to tell whether the President of Privy Council is dead or alive, and the same applies to a good many of the members over there—and I was asked the question in my trial, "Who killed him?" and I answered, "I killed him", those three words would surely constitute rather compelling evidence for a jury to bring in a verdict of guilty.

**Mr. Boulanger:** *C'est un argument simpliste.*

**Mr. Nielsen:** *C'est ça.* Mr. Speaker went on to say, "I am carefully trying to avoid coming to conclusions about this." That is to say, whether there had been any misleading of parliament. He went on to say, "I ought to review the discussion to keep it in context and that was that the solicitor general of the day may very well have been deceived by the action, which was the subject of the complaint by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham. I was making the point that by going around the minister to get to an official who may have first of all deceived the minister, and through the minister, deceived the member, and therefore the House, we were embarking upon a procedure which was unique in that respect."

He is quite correct, but hon. members will note that Mr. Speaker is very careful in his choice and permissive use of the word "may", because the other conclusion, which many in this

[Mr. Nielsen.]

country have already arrived at, is equally as applicable, that the minister himself may have deceived the House. That is what the motion is all about, to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for the purpose of conducting an investigation.

The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) was quite accurate in his contribution to this debate when he said that the normal procedure would be to have the subject matter referred to the committee where an investigation would be conducted, and after the committee had reported to the House, the House would then make a decision as to the substance of the motion itself. However, the government has plugged its ears and decided that it is not going to committee, even though it has nothing to hide, but instead the decision will be made by a vote against the motion for referral.

**Mr. Boulanger:** You're playing a game.

**Mr. Nielsen:** This is more important than a game. I suggest to the hon. member and to the hon. member for Welland—

**Mr. Railton:** You're just playing a game, Nielsen. Don't kid me.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I have been accused by the hon. member for Welland of playing a game.

**Mr. Railton:** That is my opinion.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I am not going to take objection because my hide is a little thicker than to be offended by his remark, but I am surprised that the good doctor would say such a thing because this is no game.

**Mr. Railton:** I thought that the lawyer from the Yukon was more sensible.

**Mr. Nielsen:** This matter concerns a member of this House who has been deliberately misled.

**Mr. Railton:** Baloney.

**Mr. Nielsen:** It is not baloney.

**Mr. Railton:** It is baloney.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham, the evidence is clear, was told in a letter which was signed by the solicitor general that there was no practice extant of opening the mail of citizens of this country. That is not baloney, that is fact.

**Mr. Railton:** That is baloney because both you and he have made up your minds to carry on this sort of debate. That is all it is, just a debate. You have no real reason for it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. Once again I would remind hon. members that if they wish to seek the floor they must rise in their place.

**Mr. Nielsen:** He must also take off his hat, Mr. Speaker. I find it very difficult to believe that members opposite would