

Privilege—Mr. Stanfield

some time in the 1300's there was what was known as the mad parliament. Once this has come to the attention of parliamentarians, and if this institution does not analyse the import and/or the implications of how these instructions were implemented, through the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, then perhaps this parliament will be known as the mock parliament, in terms of history, as sociologists and political scientists look at what we have done here.

Your Honour has been required to make difficult rulings over the past few months. Whether this is a mock parliament or not, certainly it has been preoccupied during the last six to eight months with security matters of all sorts, shapes, and sizes, with all the convolutions, contradictions, confessions of mistakes, and confessions of ignorance which have come up as different chapters unfold. Certainly I will not go through all of that today.

If it were not so serious, I would be almost bemused by what the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) indicated on Friday, which in effect was implied also by the Prime Minister today. Normally the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt) makes constructive and cogent arguments, but I cannot agree with what he said. The Prime Minister indicated that there is no electronic surveillance of present members of parliament. What happened to the candidates who ran for the thirtieth parliament? What will happen to the candidates who run for the thirty-first parliament? As members, we represent the people and their rights. That has been indicated by other hon. members. I ran as a candidate and was elected to the thirtieth parliament. I do not know whether I was on a list or not.

● (1622)

There has been nothing said here today which might be amplified and defined in committee that there was the surveillance of X number of Canadians. We have 264 members here, and a possible 1,200 candidates running for these 264 positions at the polls. However, hearing the speech made by the Prime Minister, with respect, I feel compelled to contribute my few cents worth here today. It is in a bemused way that I do so, with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister suggesting that this matter be referred to the McDonald commission. Yet, the Prime Minister, quite rightly perhaps, in the time of crisis in 1970, apprehended or otherwise, was most upset at an extra-parliamentary group that was supposed to be concocted and/or suggested to take over certain things.

Today, however, the argument of the government is that this fundamental question of surveillance by the RCMP or the security forces of candidates and members of parliament should be delegated to some other body, a body which is the creature of this institution. Royal commissions are the creatures of parliament, and surely we are the highest court in the land.

The thing that has interested me throughout this whole debate on privilege, and which to me is almost the proof of the pudding, is that usually on points of privilege we can rattle on and wax eloquently, quoting precedent after precedent from

[Mr. Nowlan.]

the Mother of Parliaments. We go back to Beauséne, to May, to the Mother of Parliaments; we go to the River Thames and paddle our canoes up and down, and reach into the dusty tomes of parliamentary precedents from the Mother of Parliaments. However, so far in this debate I have not heard one speaker, especially from the government side, even mention any parliamentary precedents.

The question which Your Honour has to face is so extraordinarily unique that it has never come up before. Can any of us visualize the Mother of Parliaments debating whether Scotland Yard or M-15, or whatever they call themselves, has a list of instructions to be followed on surveillance of candidates in a general election? Just propose the question, Mr. Speaker, in a rhetorical way, and think in a most subdued fashion, and it makes it seem so ridiculous. Yet, it having come up and it being there, regardless of what the precedent was, as the hon. member for New Westminster said, you obviously do not condone pernicious practice just because of knowledge. Once it comes out in the open something must be done about it, and it is with that that Your Honour is faced. That is what the members who have participated in this debate have tried to argue.

The point confronting Your Honour is so unique and extraordinary that no one has even touched on it, because the Mother of Parliaments never would have such an invidious situation as debating instructions to the RCMP on surveillance. The Prime Minister says it has been going on for over 30 years. I do not know when that code of instructions was defined, how it was defined, and as the member for Halifax says, "what are the implications of some of the words." Those are questions, Mr. Speaker, that only we can answer in committee. There may have been many names go through this parliament. We just cannot abdicate our responsibility to look into this. I do not know what this parliament is finally going to be called, but I would hate to see it called a mock parliament.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to commend the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) for having raised this point of privilege. We do not know how much longer we are going to be here, but if it should turn out that this is the last intervention by the hon. member, then it is certainly one to his credit.

I do not feel the necessity to repeat the arguments that have been made in support of the point of privilege, that has been raised, because the case has been made very effectively. As someone has said, if there is a benefit of the doubt it ought to be accorded to the rights and privileges of this institution. I would argue that if there is any question of steps being taken by the executive or by the police that have any bearing on the operation of this institution, whether we are thinking of members who are successful in getting here or those candidates who also ran, this ought to be examined by a committee of this House of Commons.

However, sir, I rose to make a particular plea, and it relates to something to which reference has been made a few times already. I should like to make the point very strongly, especially in light of the Prime Minister's urging that this matter not