

It does not have to mean that the very root of parliamentary democracy, that of accountability, has to take second place. Even from the crassest, most partisan political viewpoint, I cannot understand why we would deny a committee the right to investigate what Mr. Speaker calls a deliberate attempt to obstruct a member. To say that the privileges and elections committee is a parallel committee to the McDonald commission is about as absurd as anything I have heard. It boggles the mind. It just does not wash.

Once it is found to be a prima facie case that there was a deliberate attempt to obstruct a member—and Mr. Speaker found that that was the only conclusion to which he could come—the only conclusion was that there was a deliberate attempt to mislead; it was not negligence, carelessness or an inadvertent act, but a deliberate attempt to mislead and obstruct a member.

There is no question in Mr. Speaker's mind that it was intended to obstruct and mislead when he found there was a prima facie case, and there is no doubt whatsoever that it was a member who was being deliberately misled. No one is accusing anyone here. The hon. member for Northumberland-Durham has no idea in the world who was perpetrating the deliberate obstruction, and he has never alleged that it was the previous solicitor general. That is a possibility because, as my colleague the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) points out, he signed the letter. That is something which I would hope the committee would come to grips with immediately.

Let me say in conclusion that I implore members of the House to think about the role of the committee as the watchdog of executive action, not to try to crucify the government politically but to be the watchdog of executive action, the one form of accountability that the cabinet has to use. Why should we not have the right to discharge that function properly?

Mr. Nielsen: May I call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Is it agreed that we call it six o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2002)

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen).

Mr. Boulanger: Oh, oh!

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will have to put up with it, as well as with a good many other things before he is through. I know we are a nuisance on this side. I also know the regard on the other side for this place is such, as has been indicated by the participants in this debate, that it is a complete misconception of what it is all about.

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): That is an old cliché.

Mr. Nielsen: The hon. member does not understand this place.

Mr. Railton: It is too bad.

Mr. Nielsen: It is too bad, as the hon. member for Welland (Mr. Railton) says.

Mr. Railton: It is too bad you people do not understand it too.

Mr. Nielsen: It is too bad hon. members opposite do not understand this place.

Mr. Railton: It is too bad the hon. member is making a travesty of parliament.

Mr. Nielsen: It is a travesty of parliament to suggest that the privileges of this place and of the members of this place—

Mr. Railton: It is too bad the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen)—

An hon. Member: Order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The hon. member should address himself through the Chair. The hon. member for Yukon has the floor.

Mr. Railton: Tell the hon. member not to talk back.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I was not interrupting while the hon. member was talking; it was he.

Mr. Railton: Get down to the subject.

Mr. Nielsen: It is a travesty of this place when hon. members opposite suggest the McDonald commission would have the power to decide the privileges of members of this chamber. I cannot conceive of a more distorted idea than that which seems to be prevalent in the minds of government members. It is not in keeping with any logic whatsoever or with any traditions built up over the years. We hear from members opposite that the privileges of members of this place should be decided by the McDonald commission.

Mr. Boulanger: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: That is exactly what they have been saying.

Mr. Boulanger: The hon. member is stretching it.

Mr. Nielsen: I am not stretching it at all. That is exactly what they have been saying. They have said that we should not