

The Budget—Mr. Nielsen

Mr. Laing: Yes. That is awful.

Mr. Matheson: Everybody in parliament is embarrassed.

Mr. Nielsen: If the minister would try to exercise some responsibility in his own portfolio he would not embarrass himself and his government, as he is now doing in the whole of northern Canada.

Mr. Laing: Will the hon. member tell us what is going on in the Yukon today?

Mr. Nielsen: I can tell the minister what is going on. The Minister of Transport went up there to address a public meeting and ten people turned up to meet him. When the name of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was mentioned those at the meeting booed. That is the regard in which the policies of this government are held in the north.

Mr. Laing: We shall see about that.

Mr. Nielsen: We shall see about that. I am sure that the Minister of Transport must have told the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development about the regard in which the government is held by those in the north. If he is honest with himself he will know that I wish to help him.

Mr. Laing: Well now, this is different.

Mr. Nielsen: I want to see the minister back on the rails and I want to see him adopt the policies which were initially developed to help the people of the north.

Mr. Laing: I have had the hon. member's help in the past.

Mr. Nielsen: When election time comes I shall not help the minister. Between elections my job here is to assist in bringing about creative policies for the north.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nielsen: I will tell the minister one thing. I have never spoken at a public meeting in the Yukon and been booed.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nielsen: The government is giving the country vague and evasive answers and those who sit on this side of the house are forced to the conclusion that the government is deliberately avoiding answers to questions. One thing is certain. Whether or not my words embarrass members on this side, no one can call the Liberals cheap politicians.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

Look at what they are costing the taxpayers. I believe that the people of Canada are beginning to recognize this government for what it is and perhaps for what it is not.

On November 1 the governor of the Bank of Canada said in Winnipeg that the central and supreme fact of economic life in this country is inflation. He also said that this government has contributed to that inflation by its extraordinary and premeditated demands on the money market in its haste to be all things to all people. Yet last June the Minister of Finance said that in the present economic circumstances—he was speaking of the circumstances as they then existed—he no longer wished to restrain capital expenditures. That statement was made last June, six months ago. It was made in the course of a budget debate, and because it was made on that occasion it was the policy of the government not to restrain capital expenditures. I mention this because the minister's halo of martyrdom is wearing a little thin.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Speaking in the supply debate on November 20 the minister stated, with that great humility of which he is so capable:

I have been the one in this country who has recognized this problem more quickly than the Leader of the Opposition and more quickly than anybody else in this house.

Well, if he did recognize it in 1965, as I am sure he did, why did he and his colleagues not do something about it?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nielsen: It is precisely this holier than thou attitude which makes the minister's position so indefensible. He may have recognized the situation more quickly than anybody else, but last June he was saying that further measures of restraint were not necessary and that the government no longer wished to restrain capital expenditures. Those were his words and he cannot get away from them. They were made in the course of a budget speech and they therefore represent government policy, just as it is the deliberate policy of the government to let Canadians pay through unemployment and high taxes for its own fiscal immoderation. I will refer to this in detail.

This is a stereophonic government, Mr. Speaker, talking out of both sides of its mouth at the same time. Here is something else which may embarrass hon. members opposite: I believe this government has just