

Privilege—Mr. Korchinski

into the ways in which the purpose of the motion can be achieved, as soon as possible, and report to the House.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. KORCHINSKI—PRESS INTERVIEW BY MR. LANG

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege as a result of an interview granted to the Canadian Press by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), as reported in the *Ottawa Citizen* of November 9, with regard to the use of government aircraft.

This subject was first raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt); however, reading the article without knowing the background, one would conclude that it was raised as a result of the inquiry by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom). However, that is not the main point of my complaint.

My complaint is that the minister, as quoted in the article, stated that other members of parliament are welcome to travel with him, and that many have seized the chance, "including Stanley Korchinski, PC, Mackenzie, two weeks ago".

Anyone reading this article might justifiably conclude that there was some advantage to me as a member in taking this particular flight with the minister on a Jetstar, when in actual fact the minister is only insulating himself from public criticism by providing misleading information.

The facts as they transpired are these: New airport facilities were to be opened on October 15 at La Ronge. Hon. members will appreciate the importance of this occasion since I represent an area approximately 600 miles by 150 miles, and La Ronge happens to be in my constituency. It is 350 miles from my home base, which is in the constituency,—incidentally and I can fly three hours straight north and still be within it.

This new airport is the first airport in the riding, other than the gravel or sod strips and lakes which we use for landing. I received a letter dated October 1 from the minister informing me that the new facilities would be officially opened by him and by the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan. This letter pointed out the services which would be provided and very graciously extended an invitation to me to join the official party for the opening. Nowhere in the letter was there an invitation by the minister to me to accompany him on the Jetstar. I could have used a commercial airline to fly to Regina or Saskatoon via Air Canada and then on to La Ronge by Norcanair, but if I had done so I would have sought a government warrant for the flight, which is my right, and which would have been a cost to the treasury.

Instead I chose the cheapest method, and I asked my office to inquire whether it would be possible for me to be aboard the Jetstar which the minister would be using anyway. The minister gave his consent to this and, in fact, offered to return me to the capital after a stopover at Saskatoon.

[Mr. Speaker.]

There were four passengers besides the crew aboard the flight on the morning of October 15. The minister was accompanied by two members of his staff who deplaned at Winnipeg. The purpose of their visit to Winnipeg was unknown to me. From Winnipeg to La Ronge the only passengers aboard the Jetstar were the minister and I. I was offered a flight from La Ronge to Saskatoon after the ceremonies, with a further offer of a flight from Saskatoon to Ottawa on the following day at 4 p.m. I declined this offer. Instead I worked my way back to Regina where I picked up my car and headed for my home, which is in my riding. I returned to the capital on Monday and was in the House on that occasion as the recorded vote on that day will attest.

The minister's flight schedule did not call for his immediate return to Ottawa from his official duties, and I agree that it is within the right of the minister to use a government plane on official duties. Instead he diverted to Saskatoon, his constituency, for the balance of the day, and until 4 p.m. the following day, or the time of his departure for Ottawa, whichever was the latest. Since government aircraft are charged on the basis of time lapsed rather than actual miles travelled, I presume the minister owes an explanation as to what activities he participated in during the time lapse from the departure from La Ronge to the time he left Saskatoon for Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Korchinski: Although I am not aware of his activities—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Korchinski:—during those 24 hours, it may be that an investigation—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As has always been my practice I have allowed the hon. member, pursuant to his notice of his question of privilege, to go on for some time now in raising his question of privilege. I think all hon. members are aware that this question, as with many previously proposed questions of privilege, has been raised as a result of some kind of disagreement or difference in interpretation of the language used either in the House or, in this case, outside the House, which makes it more difficult.

I do not like to cut a member too short in attempting to develop whatever question of privilege may exist; however, the hon. member has gone on now for quite some time to develop a disagreement with the statements which are attributed to the minister, and if there is no further development of the matter which relates to the privileges of the House I think the matter ought to be discontinued. If, however, the hon. member proposes to raise anything which relates to a question of privilege, I would be pleased to hear it. If not, I do not propose to hear the hon. member any further, nor do I propose to hear any other hon. member who may want to make a contribution to this particular debate.