

Alleged Leak re New Airport Site

minister responsible for regional development, I wish to point out that my department had a special part to play in the discussions and studies that have led to the selection of the site of the future Montreal airport.

Since many people were interested in having this airport within their areas, it was important to inform them quickly of the various reasons why the government had taken a particular decision. That is why I agreed, at the request of the Department of Transport, to put on tape on Sunday night, March 23, two television and one radio broadcasts in French on the probable site of the airport.

I understood that the Department of Transport, whose responsibility it was to prepare the publicity concerning the announcement of this site, had done its preparatory work on the assumption that the airport would be located at St. Scholastique, west of St. Jérôme. Actually, the cabinet's decision was only taken on Thursday, March 27.

Without being aware of the security measures the Department of Transport had taken, I understood that those advance recordings would be used only upon confirmation by the cabinet of the site located north west of Montreal. Otherwise, they were to be destroyed.

Under such circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I was not and I am still not aware of having committed any indiscretion, since the cabinet had not yet reached a final decision as to the site.

As for other details pertaining to the incident, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) has given them to the house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I notice that the hon. member for Calgary North wishes to take part in this discussion. I am not sure whether this is the wish of the house, in view of the fact that the hon. member made a rather full presentation on Friday last. However, in a matter such as this the Chair likes the house to determine what procedure should be followed. If it is the unanimous wish of hon. members that the hon. member for Calgary North be allowed to make a further statement I would have no objection.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member would limit his comments at this time to the procedural aspects of the matter.

[*Mr. Marchand (Langelier).*]

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunities given to me by the house to answer some of the points which have been made today. I may say at the outset that since my question of privilege was raised on Friday last much new evidence has come to light. It seems to me that a very unusual defence has been raised. By referring to some of the authorities and to some of the evidence I believe I can still convince Your Honour that there is a prima facie case here. This does not mean of course that the ministers are guilty. It simply means that the facts would justify an investigation and inquiry. This was my submission on Friday, and it is my submission today. I hope hon. members will be permitted to express their views, and I wish to be allowed to express mine.

It is no defence to maintain, as I understood both ministers to do, that we are living in a tuned-in, turned-on world in the new telecommunication political arena and that the pretaping of information must be undertaken in order to communicate information to the public. This is the using of a well known Liberal, public relations, planned package. They say, of course, that it is done in order to communicate information to the public. This is their defence. I say it is no defence at all. That is why we have a press gallery. That is why in the press gallery there are members of the television, radio and newspaper media who carry the news as soon as it is delivered in this institution of parliament.

I am sure that all the radio and T.V. media will agree that the newspapers of Canada have an equal opportunity to disseminate news across the nation, although their methods and timing are different. The public of Canada are not so interested in seeing and hearing ministers speak; they are interested in having the news. With the greatest respect, this news can be disseminated by T.V. and radio without pre-taping news and without hiring fancy advisers to print the package in this form long before the decision is announced.

This question should have been answered earlier, and I am shocked that it was not. The excuse of the government is that they made a tape and set up this very expensive, colourful package because they had not yet made a decision, and if the money of the taxpayers' was to be set aside, the tape would be destroyed and the famous package would be burned. I ask, Mr. Speaker: Was more than one tape made in reference to the various