

Inquiries of the Ministry

COMMUNICATIONS

INVESTMENT RETURN FROM TELESAT

Mr. Ed Schreyer (Selkirk): My question Mr. Speaker, is directed to the Minister of Communications. Can the minister explain to the house how it was possible for him to say in reply to a question in the standing committee the other day that he was not in a position to indicate what the government target was in terms of a return on an investment in the Canadian Telesat Corporation, and then two hours later give that information to the press?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. member questions my judgment, perhaps he should allow me to indicate that I think this is purely argumentative and not the type of question in any event which can properly be asked at this time.

Mr. Schreyer: May I submit to Your Honour what I consider might be regarded as a question of privilege. It would be on a subject concerning which the minister refused to give information in committee, and very soon thereafter gave specific information to the press.

Mr. Speaker: It may be difficult to explain, but I would think it is still not a question of privilege. If it were put as a question of privilege, I would have to consider it, but I gather this is not what the hon. member has done at this time.

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker: In reply to the question raised by the hon. member—

Mr. Speaker: The minister may have a question of privilege on his own, but I have not allowed the hon. member for Selkirk a question of privilege and I have not allowed him to ask the question. I doubt whether the minister can now reply to a question which has not been allowed.

Mr. Kierans: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The reports in the press were taken entirely from the hearing. I spoke to no member of the press afterwards, to the best of my knowledge. During the hearings of the committee I did say I hoped that the corporation would achieve a profit between 8 and 12 per cent. This is the basis for the reports which appeared in the newspapers.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): On the point of order which Your Honour raised, may I say this practice is now becoming so shockingly prevalent that Your Honour might give consideration to varying the rule you have properly propounded. This procedure has prevailed in the past, that of ministers saying one thing in the house and saying something different outside the house. It has become so widespread and prevalent, Your Honour might give some thought to this matter.

Mr. Kierans: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: We are not making much progress. The minister made his point on a question of privilege. He has assured the house that he did not make a statement subsequent to his evidence given in committee. I do not see why the matter should be pursued further.

IMMIGRATION

RUDOLPH HOLATA—PROTEST AGAINST HOLDING IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I asked the Minister of Manpower and Immigration about a very serious matter the other day, and he was not in the house yesterday. It concerns Rudolph Holata who has been held in a Czechoslovakian prison. I do not know what is happening to him. He is a member of the Department of Transport.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the house would not mind the reply being given at this time.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): I am aware of the interest of the hon. member. However, I have investigated the case and I find it is a matter within the jurisdiction of my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Mr. Paproski: Can he answer it, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: The President of the Privy Council can be recognized in a moment. The minister has been allowed to reply to the question in the time allocated for questions.