

minister, in a show of good faith, withdraw this \$4.3 million item? After all, this matter affects not only the people of the Pickering region; it affects the entire municipality of metropolitan Toronto. It does not merely involve some 30,000 expropriated property owners; it involves an urban area with a population of between three million and four million. As I say, to demonstrate his good faith the minister ought to withdraw that \$4.3 million item. He does not need it, unless he is determined to go ahead with the building of the airport regardless of what happens, and unless he is going through the motions of setting up an independent board of examination merely to placate a restless public.

I suggest that in the months ahead sound and valid submissions and arguments will be put before the board of examination and the government would do well to listen. I suggest that there will be arguments saying that housing and public transportation should enjoy greater priority in the urban regions of Canada, particularly the region that I know so well, metropolitan Toronto. I suggest, also, that the government has made a fundamental mistake in planning. It has planned on the basis of passenger projections taken to the year 2000 which show that the municipality of metropolitan Toronto area by that time may have a population in the vicinity of eight million people. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Guay) suggested two weeks ago that it was assumed implicitly that the area would grow to six million people. He might be surprised to learn that many thousands of voters in the urban areas of the country reject the notion of uncontrolled and unqualified growth.

There is a fundamental issue at stake in the planning of this airport. It is not just a question of a few expropriated property owners, although they are important; it is the whole question of urban priorities in our country that must be considered. The government should give the matter serious reconsideration. I hope its actions and further terms of reference, be they in the form of amendments or further directions from the minister, will reflect more serious concern and demonstrate good faith for a change, so that the board of examination can earnestly listen to the people of the area and carefully recommend to the government the wisest course of action to follow.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I ask the indulgence of the House in order to say a few words about Information Canada. As the House knows, various questions have been asked about Information Canada, the most recent having to do with arrangements in the city of Montreal and a project called AIMS.

Before going into some of the questions which have been raised about Information Canada, I wish to review some of its activities. It has been attacked in the House and elsewhere for being ineffective and not performing a useful role. We should recall at the outset the original purpose of Information Canada. Let me just repeat its main purpose. It was to make factual and useful information on federal policies and programs more easily available to the average citizen who previously often became lost in the bureau-

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cratic maze when seeking such information. I do not think any hon. member would disagree with that objective.

Problems exist. A great deal of suspicion arises when you set up an agency to disseminate factual information about government programs to the Canadian people who have a right to know the particulars and details of those programs, and the question arises, how can you distinguish between that information and so-called government propaganda? That the line between the two can at times be very thin is no reason for negating the primary function of disseminating information to the public concerning government programs. Think of all the citizens who go to members of parliament, visiting their offices or writing letters seeking detailed information about a whole range of government programs. Senior citizens ask for details about old age pensions, guaranteed income supplement or about some of the complicated features of the Canada Pension Plan. Others ask questions about family allowances, workmen's compensation and various welfare programs. Questions about mothers' allowances are asked by widows, or divorced or separated parents.

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These people do not have the patience to listen to a dissertation about the various fields of jurisdiction—federal, provincial, municipal. All too often they went through a maze of bureaucracy before they came to their federal member for assistance. Very often the MP has to obtain an answer for them whether the matter falls within his responsibility or not. As a result of the government becoming involved in so many fields in an effort to mitigate hardship, a need arises for the details of such programs to be explained to citizens so that the less fortunate may have access to them as well as some of the more educated and better informed citizens who because of their occupation or background, are more familiar with them. So hon. members can see there is a real function to be performed here.

I agree it is important that there should be a marked distinction between propagandizing government programs and getting factual information out to the public concerning details of programs designed to help them. How can people take advantage of such programs if they are unaware of them, or unaware of the location of the regional office or of the existence of staff who could assist them? I suggest that because of the very nature of parliament, the politicians who make it up and the media which comment on events, Information Canada is subject to a strong monitoring process. We constantly hear it criticized, sometimes to excess in my view, particularly should there be a question of it crossing the fine line between the dissemination of factual information on one hand and propagandizing the government on the other.

Frankly, after looking over much of the material put out by Information Canada I think it would be very difficult for members of parliament to conclude that its function is to aggrandize the image of the government of the day. Most of the information is factual; there is very little flowery rhetoric attached to it. I would be the first to concede that the agency has made mistakes. But if hon. members agree that the primary function is to make factual and useful information on federal programs more easily available to the average citizen, I would ask them this