

point where many Canadians have concluded that such statements merit examination by a third party. The government which once threatened an investigation now refuses it, and the motion under discussion is the result.

Honourable senators, let me be perfectly clear. A parliamentary inquiry such as we propose is far from the kind which is appropriate to the circumstances and events which have been described in the last year. An independent inquiry is what is required. However, the government refuses. The inquiry which I am asking honourable senators to support will be able, however, to get to the bottom of very disturbing allegations which have been made about events surrounding the Pearson agreements. The inquiry will also provide those who have been maligned by the government's allegations a proper forum in which to answer their accusers.

I do not intend to give a full listing here of the charges and accusations which government spokesmen have been tossing about in the last year. I will give only a few in order to remind everyone of the severity of the attacks and to give some idea of the damage they have inflicted. I am only one of the many who can speak from special knowledge of the hurt involved.

On July 5, 1994, before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, the Minister of Transport when reacting to certain comments of mine with which he did not agree, which is certainly his right, said:

However, at some point I would like to know who you are speaking for, if it is not the people who are involved in the process.

Honourable senators, has there ever been a time before this when a minister of the Crown came before a Senate committee and imputed venal motives to one of its members?

After hearing representations from learned witnesses that the bill offended the rule of law, the Senate returned Bill C-22 to the House with remedial amendments. A few days later, the Prime Minister reacted as follows:

I don't think the Tory Senators will last very long in the public opinion trying to help their friends... We'll let them boil in their own juices...

The Minister of Justice, not to be outdone, said, "me too!" in these words:

I observe that the majority on the Committee that made those recommendations are Progressive Conservative Senators. I think that has a lot to do with it.

As to the worth of the amendments, not a word was said. Honourable senators, listen to some of the litany of invective which Canadians have had to endure over the last few months:

...one last snatch at the public purse by the Tories and their friends...

...the biggest ripoff in Canadian history...

...one last trip to the trough...

...the Pearson deal stinks out every Tory in Toronto...

[Senator Lynch-Staunton]

...a cesspool of intrigue and manipulation...

...one of the most dastardly deals ever put together in the history of the country...

...we are not going down the road of trying to line our friends' pockets with money, which the Conservative majority in the Senate is trying to protect now.

This selection, colleagues, is incomplete, but typical of the government's attempt to force through repugnant legislation on the canard that those involved in the Pearson agreements are themselves repugnant.

I started these remarks by saying that this motion is presented with little enthusiasm. Only circumstances which result exclusively from a government cannonade of statements raising serious concerns about all aspects surrounding the Pearson agreements have led us to this stage in the Senate. The attempts of the Leader of the Government to justify certain accusations as expressions of frustration, rather than a slight on anyone in particular, are a commendable example of sustaining cabinet solidarity but not at all convincing. Off the cuff and impulsive as she may claim the statements quoted were, the evidence leads one to conclude that they were really part of a planned, massive character assassination campaign which persists and aggravates.

How else, then, to explain a letter dated March 1, 1995 from the Minister of Transport in answer to one dated October 7, 1994 from the member from Kootenay West-Revelstoke? I will read certain extracts, and I assure honourable senators that they are not taken out of context.

The minister writes:

...I must stress that Bill C-22 was in fact designed to protect taxpayers from an unprecedented raid on their pocket books...allowances have been made to recompense those involved for 'out-of-pocket' expenses, something which the government would not have been required to do even under common law, if wrongdoing had taken place. This government is merely emphasizing that the deal was a bad one, both for the traveller and the taxpayer...this deal did not provide value to anyone.

This was not said by an individual pressured under questioning in a scrum. It was written in answer to a letter dated nearly five months earlier. Of all the minister's verbal assaults, it has to be the most grotesque. He appears to be telling us that the Government of Canada is willing to pay millions of dollars in claims for out-of-pocket expenses, even if wrongdoing had taken place. Surely, all honourable senators will agree that any suspicion of wrongdoing should automatically preclude a payment of even one cent as long as grave uncertainty persists. What better way to get to the bottom of this issue than through a full-fledged inquiry, which would also allow an examination of the accusation repeated many times over — that those in this chamber who question the constitutionality of Bill C-22 are really motivated by seeing that the "recompense" is as generous as possible?

The motion before us, honourable senators, is to strike a special committee to examine the policies behind the government's preparing a request for proposals for Pearson airport, the bidding process, the negotiations, the agreements