

I should like to make one last point. It is ridiculous to say that no harm was done, and that they tried to keep this quiet even though a hundred people knew about it. It is just as ridiculous as if one were to say in defence of a man who was drunk and drove up the hill on the wrong side of the road that he did not kill anyone. This will explode in their faces. The ministers must remember that they admitted in the house that they pre-taped the announcement, they used public relations, and that there may be as many as a hundred people in the know. They said this would not affect the price of land and the expropriation proceedings. Such a law stated by such ministers is hogwash. This is no defence.

I submit that there is a prima facie case that both the ministers are guilty of impropriety, and this should be investigated.

I suggest to you, sir, with reference to the procedure, that the motion was moved and that the point of privilege was raised on the floor of the house. It had to be made without notice at the time. I ask you to take that into consideration, and in the light of the minister's startling admissions it is high time that this and other matters which may be occurring in the cabinet be investigated by a standing committee of the house. If this is not done, it will not be long before a judicial inquiry is started to put these men under oath so that the Canadian people may know the facts.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I intend to limit myself entirely to the procedural question which you placed before us. The other day I listened to the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams), not knowing anything about the subject matter which he raised. I therefore held my judgment on the prima facie aspect of the case in abeyance, but I earnestly suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the statements made by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) and the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development (Mr. Marchand) establish a clear prima facie case for the motion which was moved.

What are we concerned with? We are concerned with two basic questions: first, was there advance information to people who are not in the public service about the likely choice of an airport, and second, was that advance information provided to such people outside the public service by the ministers concerned or under and with their authority.

• (2:40 p.m.)

You are not concerned, Mr. Speaker—your insistence that this matter be dealt with as a

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matter of procedure surely underlines this—and neither are the members of this chamber concerned with whether or not there were or could have been improper consequences as a result of this disclosure. That is a matter that the committee to which this question is to be referred will have an opportunity to decide. For the purpose of a prima facie case only, I submit that all you need to know is what were the admissions, made in a rather arrogant way, in a way which suggested—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lewis: Hold it a minute—in a way which suggested that the ministers did not in the least feel there was any question about the propriety of their actions. That is why I say it is arrogance. I submit to Your Honour that any objective look at the situation must suggest that there was at least some question about the judgment and propriety of what they did.

It is in connection with the procedural question that I must refer to some of the things said by the ministers. I do so, not to argue the merits of what they said but to indicate the irrelevance of what they said to the issue that is now before Your Honour.

The Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) has said that there were discussions over a number of months in which various levels of government were involved. Precisely there lies the difference between people in the civil service of Canada, or the public service of the province of Quebec, or the public service of the city of Montreal, civil servants who, under law, by the oath that they take and the functions they perform, are expected to and in fact do observe the secrecy required, and that class of persons represented by a public relations agency, or people working for television stations, or people producing a booklet or pre-taping material.

To contend otherwise is, I suggest, a specious kind of argument that seeks to confuse rather than to illuminate, and this applies to the minister's reference to public servants being in on the discussions. For example, civil servants are engaged in the preparation of every budget that is presented in Canada. If there are budgetary discussions between officials of the federal and provincial governments, then provincial civil servants engage in them. Nobody suggests that is an improper situation. But what is improper is for a public relations agency, a private agency, private television people, private radio people and the like to be brought into a discussion about