

under a mistaken impression of what that entailed?

[Translation]

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, the pre-retirement plan was accepted by the union, which understood it, studied it and indicated to us that it was satisfactory. If I must choose between the judgment of the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond and that of the executive of the union, I prefer that of the executive. If it is insinuated that the representatives of the United Mine Workers of America did not understand, that they allowed their members to be pushed around, it certainly does not prove much respect for the union leaders in Cape Breton. I say I have more respect for them than that.

If there have been new developments, I have no objection to studying them. On the contrary, I would be the first to do so. Still, it was recently stated in the House that we received telegrams from the United Mine Workers of America which, in fact, were official interventions. I looked everywhere; I asked Devco to supply me with them; we do not have any. We have received only one protest from the Retired Miners Union, and not from the United Mine Workers of America which officially represents the miners. I saw no other document. If there are any, I would be happy to see them. I should like to make sure that we were not the only ones to have received those documents and that they were in fact addressed to those concerned.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, we will have the opportunity in committee to study more closely each one of the grievances which may have been voiced. We will attempt, in a civilized manner, to determine objectively what the situation is.

What we are asking now is, as I have said, a simple amendment, not a simplistic one. It is not a series of provisions that must be interpreted by comparison with one another, but the bill simply says: We shall authorize the Cape Breton Development Corporation, the DEVCO, to guarantee loans for industrial development to the extent of \$100 million. Why? In order to give to DEVCO the same powers which my department enjoys in special areas, which means that DEVCO must not be prevented at some time from developing the area because it has not been authorized to guarantee loans. This is not giving money away, as has been suggested. As a matter of fact, the bill does not provide for that. All the bill provides for is to authorize DEVCO to guarantee loans for industrial development purposes.

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Moreover, I am told that this should be done directly by the government. Of course, we shall have occasion to discuss that point with the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), since the corporations set up by the government do not necessarily offer guarantees of success. Besides, the hon. member knows very well that Deuterium of Canada Limited, a corporation controlled by the Nova Scotia government, has not met with much economic success. Because industrial development is carried on by a Crown company does not mean that success is assured automatically.

Anyway, an honest discussion can be entered into, and I am prepared to go along with it any time, except tonight, because now some hon. members are trying to show that this amendment will have very serious consequences, which is not true. It simply puts Devco in respect of the Cape Breton area in a position similar to that of my department in respect of the special areas. No more, no less. Therefore, the point is not to create a precedent, but simply to take steps to prevent the same people charging us with having prevented the development of Cape Breton by refusing to authorize the company to do what is provided for in the amendment.

In fact, it would be very easy to blame the government should we learn one day that a company had been unable to settle in Cape Breton because the government had been mean, had not treated the Island in exactly the same way as the special areas. No doubt we would hear all sorts of comments. We want this company to be unable to find excuses and the region to be on an equal footing with special areas, according to the provisions of the basic legislation establishing the department. The act does not aim at giving money, nor at looking after special friends, but at promoting industrial development, what the corporation has already started to do and, I hope will continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, in that sense it is a simple amendment. We will no doubt have the opportunity to start this whole debate over again in committee and also when the estimates for Devco will be introduced in the house, to criticize Devco again. It is normal that violent attacks should be launched and I will surely not get angry. But when speakers strike below the belt, I react like any human being. Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to say that we have no right to leave the people of Cape Breton in an inferior condition com-