

of all hon. members of the House that parliament would become more accountable in terms of the people of Canada and more relevant to their need to understand public affairs. We had hoped as well, that the government would not continue the practice of making announcements outside the House of Commons where television cameras were used exclusively, although they are now, here.

We had hoped there would not be a continuation, if an announcement were made outside the House—particularly now—of what would be an affront to parliament and to the people of the country. I raise the matter quite seriously. I looked upon the bringing of this great innovation in parliamentary reporting—I hope the view was shared generally by members of the public—as something that could involve the House of Commons and the utilization of the procedure with respect to statements on motions on important government matters.

I just want to say to the government House leader that I think the Parliament of Canada would be very greatly disturbed if tomorrow, or at any other time, ministers did not take advantage of the existence in this chamber of an electronic *Hansard* which is made available every day to a wider and wider group of Canadians, at great public expense, so that the people of Canada could see important statements made in the setting of the House where members have the opportunity to question government members through the electronic *Hansard*, as representatives of the people, about what the government intends and expects from the various policies it announces.

I ask my colleague, the House leader of the government, to bring to the attention of the Prime Minister and his colleagues in the cabinet the very high importance that all members of the House attach to the provision in our rules with respect to statements being made here. If a statement is made outside the House tomorrow, now that statements can be made publicly in the House, I think parliament will have been let down by this government and the people of Canada will be affronted.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, on the assumption that we are still on the question of House business, I have two questions I should like to put to the government House leader. In the first place, will the government shortly be introducing bills to replace the two items in the supplementary estimates that were struck out of that bill, procedurally, yesterday? I refer to an item having to do with DEVCO and to another item having to do with VIA Rail.

My second question has to do with the future business of the House. In view of the fact that the government did not provide us at the beginning of this session, as is frequently done, with a list of the measures it intended to place before parliament could we be provided with such a list before the Christmas recess?

Mr. MacEachen: I do not see very much hope in bringing legislation on VIA Rail or the items that were struck out of the

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supplementary estimates providing relief to a number of municipalities in Cape Breton if there is no chance of having the legislation passed. Almost nothing has been passed in this session, and it is already December 8. Therefore, I do not see much point in trying to bring in items on these two matters in light of the pace legislation is being dealt with.

In reply to the other part of the hon. member's question, I will attempt to provide an advance forecast of what legislative items will be attempted in this session, but there has not been much encouragement to prepare a legislative program—although we have been working on it—in view of the present situation in the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Would the minister permit a question on what he has just said, before he goes on to another subject? The minister may be right about VIA Rail—I do not know—but I am thoroughly satisfied that all members of the House will readily grant a bill with respect to the money that was intended for Devco. That was said very clearly by those who raised the procedural objection. I was on the other side of the argument; I did not join in the procedural objection. I put this question to the minister: Will he canvass the possibility of getting at least the Devco bill passed without debate?

Mr. MacEachen: I think it is the responsibility of hon. members opposite, who put procedural niceties ahead of the hard-pressed needs of the communities in industrial Cape Breton—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't look at me on that one.

Mr. MacEachen:—and not plead now, having struck out the item on a procedural subtlety, and come to me and say, "Do something about it", as a result of the very misguided and unwise intervention made by members of the official opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may be that the last two or three words of the government House leader will meet my point of order, but I suggest the minister has no right to suggest that I had raised a procedural nicety about the Devco matter. He knows I fought very hard, in procedural terms, for the regularity of that item which I thought was in order.

Mr. MacEachen: Obviously, I agree with the comments made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, and I did not have him in mind when I referred to the rather bewildering action that was taken by the official opposition in light of the very severe unemployment situation which exists in industrial Cape Breton.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton raised a matter with respect to ministerial statements. He is dealing with a purely hypothetical situation. He is saying that if the Prime Minister were to make a statement tomorrow, then he would