

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. In view of the continuing telegrams of protest and other communications we are receiving it would appear that this message is not getting through to those concerned, and we are worried about this sort of thing. Perhaps I should direct the question to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion; I see he is here today. Would the minister cause an investigation to be made into this whole subject so that we can reach a decision as to who is right? The message apparently is not getting through to the men receiving the moneys and I think they have a right to an investigation. I may not be a "second-hand Rose" but I think I should have the courtesy of an answer in this House.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must say that I got in touch with Devco. No complaint was made either to Devco or to my department. The union to which the hon. member is referring is in fact a small group of superannuated employees which is called a Union and which has no connection with the United Mines Workers of America who have made no request in the name of those pensioners.

[English]

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, that statement is completely erroneous. We have a statement here in a letter of protest from the President of the C.B. of R.T. which represents the men who are at present working in the Devco coal mines. I wish the minister would get on the job so he would know what is happening.

Mr. Hees: That is asking too much.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I have order, please.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion to look at his files and see if they do not contain these wires and correspondence that he and the Prime Minister deny receiving. We have checked it out and the telegrams were delivered, but they have denied receiving these protests against the action of the Cape Breton Development Corporation. In view of the fact that the corporation is breaking the law every day, will he see—

[Mr. Mackasey.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the hon. member has already asked his question it should not be repeated.

Mr. MacInnis: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, the question was put to the government whether they had received protests not from retired miners but from active locals within Cape Breton protesting the action of Devco. This was denied by the government but it has since been checked out and Canadian National Telegraph will confirm that these wires were received.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. With respect, I have to suggest to the hon. member that he may have a point for debate but I would not think that this constitutes a question of privilege. I think we should go on to another subject.

Mr. MacInnis: On the same question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: It would have to be a different question of privilege. The hon. member may have another point and I will listen to him.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, I am like the Minister of Labour; I have got hundreds of examples. Does the government now deny receiving these protests from active local unions?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, at times I am asked if I have received a message. When I know I say I have or have not, and when I do not know I say I will check. It is conceivable that members of the public send their telegrams to members of the opposition so that they know about matters before I do but, except in this case, I always check if I have received them.

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): January 18.

Mr. MacInnis: Now that the Prime Minister has seen fit to answer my question, can I consider this a promise broken?

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): The Prime Minister is a funny boy, not a "Funny Girl".

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NIGERIA—EFFECTIVENESS OF RELIEF OPERATIONS

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.