

infer that Parliament had no role in the passage of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, in your learned reply, you made it abundantly clear that the government should never take the support of the House of Commons for granted. In fact, at the time you warned the government, and perhaps I may quote: "However, I want the House to understand very clearly that if your Speaker ever happens to consider a situation like this again, the Chair will not be as generous".

Mr. Speaker, it so happens that I must draw to your attention a similar situation, based on the press release on September 14, 1990, concerning the launching of the Hibernia project.

Mr. Speaker, I was at home watching Newsworld which was broadcasting the events live, when I heard the first statement from the press release, which started like this: "It's official: work on the Hibernia project, estimated at several billion dollars and to be carried out off the coast of Newfoundland, will start immediately, the federal government announced today". Worse than that, Mr. Speaker, while listening to the various speeches, I heard Premier Clyde Wells, and I will quote what he said from the MTT, The media Tapes and Transcript.

[*English*]

—the Hibernia bill has been passed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, as a member of this House. I was absolutely flabbergasted when I realized that this bill had passed without my being aware of it I checked, and I found that Bill C-44 was still at the report stage. So the government had made a public announcement and issued a press release saying it was official, without consulting the House and its members in effect using Parliament as a rubber stamp.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recall what you said on October 10, and also what Premier Wells said about there being an agreement with the opposition parties. Mr. Speaker, we were never party to any agreement whatsoever to sneak this bill through the House at top speed. As you know, \$2.7 billion are involved in this project, including \$675 million from Quebec taxpayers, and we demand the right to consider those facts here in the House, Mr. Speaker.

Points of Order

I insist on bringing this press release and all related statements to your attention, because what happened was that they used Parliament as a rubber stamp. You yourself warned on October 10, 1989, that you would not be as generous next time.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question of privilege. Parliament has been disregarded and ignored, by a government has taken its support for granted, which does not that reflect well on members opposite, who are being treated like a herd of sheep or a bunch of voting machines. I know most of them are, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this is an insult to all parliamentarians here in this House, and I would ask you to rule on this matter.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to intervene for a couple of minutes. I want to indicate to the hon. member and to the House that, in fact, the Government of Canada has entered into an agreement with the Province of Newfoundland which is mutually acceptable to both levels of government.

I should also indicate to the hon. member that under the existing estimates, which were by this House at another time, the essential funds to start up the project have already been approved and are in place. So there is absolutely no discrepancy between what we, as members, are now dealing with in this House, that is, Bill C-44, and the fact that the announcements have proceeded and that things are going. I do not see any inconsistency at all. It is an interesting point of order but perhaps it should be better described as debate.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, so far this is a point of privilege. What my hon. friend—

An hon. member: A point of privilege?

Mr. Riis: He is arguing a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The point being made is that the government has prejudged what Parliament will do. We have seen this occur on previous occasions and on those occasions your rulings were very specific.

I agree with the comments made by my hon. friend earlier. I was surprised that legislation had been passed. In fact, it had not been passed when I heard a deal had