

Inquiries of the Ministry

from Edinburgh who is reputedly well versed in sealing. They are conducting some experiments with new killing methods.

INDUSTRY**CAPE BRETON, N.S.—CONTINUED OPERATION OF McBEAN MINE**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. Russell MacEwan (Pictou): Mr. Speaker, not long ago the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources advised the house that the Cape Breton Development Corporation is taking over all Dosco mines except one, the McBean mine in my constituency, on April 1. Will he now advise the house what plans the government has to continue in production this one mine which employs about 400 men?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago I discussed the matter with the former premier of Nova Scotia and representatives of miners. We had then concluded that we would consider the possibility of finding an independent contractor who would be in charge of that mine and would develop it at a reduced pace. I submitted this request to the Cape Breton Development Corporation. The vice president made it and reported his recommendations to the board which is supposed to make a decision and let me know it in the near future.

[*English*]

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, will the minister review the remarks made by the Prime Minister on national television last evening and indicate as soon as possible to the house when the money will be available to keep the Sydney steel operation and the McBean mine going? I think the minister has indicated that he is ready to answer the question. At least he could indicate whether he is interested in the remarks made by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If the only thing the hon. member wants to know is whether the minister is interested in the remarks of the Prime Minister, certainly the question is not in order to that extent. I realize that the second part of the question is in order.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): With all due respect, sir, I would have directed my question to the proper minister or the Prime Minister if they had been in attendance in the house.

[*Mr. Laing.*]

SYDNEY, N.S.—REFUSAL OF FEDERAL LOAN TO PURCHASE STEEL PLANT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, since the right hon. Prime Minister has apparently been detained perhaps I might direct my question to either the Acting Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance. The question relates to the Prime Minister's letter of March 8 to the premier of Nova Scotia in which the government gives its regrettable decision to the effect that it is not going to lend to the province of Nova Scotia half the capital cost of acquiring the assets of the steel mill at Sydney. In view of the very great difficulty any provincial government would have in borrowing this large sum of money because of the present state of the financial market, is the government going to offer any alternative form of assistance such as guaranteeing the loan, thus enabling the government of Nova Scotia to borrow this very considerable sum?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker, that would not be the government's intention.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I think the amount involved is something in the neighbourhood of \$44 million. The province of Quebec has just had to involve eight banks in order to obtain \$38 million. In view of this difficulty, what alternative policy is the government proposing to help Nova Scotia raise this very considerable sum at this very critical time in the money market?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the government set forth in the letter from the Prime Minister to the premier of Nova Scotia the assistance that the federal government is prepared to give.

Mr. Douglas: In this regard, nothing.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance tell us whether the government has made up its mind that it has a claim on that money?

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance to consult with his colleagues in cabinet and ask them to give a little kinder treatment to the cabinet representative from Nova Scotia.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to persist in this question but I ask it again because the letter sent