

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

coal could have been used at the Saint John plant, there should have been a larger market for Canadian coal today than there is. The plain fact of the matter is that since the present government got into power, notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Stanfield stated that the present Prime Minister had promised to see that coal was used, the government of the province of New Brunswick chose to build a plant designed to use oil, and which is still using oil. I suggest that had that Liberal policy been continued, and if the plant had continued to be owned by the federal government, the price of coal would have been subsidized and brought down to the cost of oil, so that the plant could have used that coal. I suggest the fact that the policy was not followed by the Tory government represents the difference between Tory policy and Liberal policy.

The Saint John plant was built by the present Minister of Forestry, who was then the premier of New Brunswick, to use oil, which indicates that he turned his back on the coal industry as well as the federal aid offered by his own friends in this house. I suggest that indicates the measure of his interest in regard to the situation facing the coal industry in the maritime provinces. I do not think even the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond, who is very skilful at these things, can get around that situation.

I should suggest, however, that the important thing is not really what might have happened, or might not have happened in 1955, 1956, 1957, or even in 1958, but what is going to happen in 1961. I am not surprised that hon. gentlemen opposite continually drag out all these things that happened in the 1940's. I am surprised they do not go as far back as the 1930's, but, perhaps, when they considered doing so, they realize that during the 1930's, when the Bennett government was in power, coal production was even lower than it is now, and they prefer to forget about it.

The fact of the matter is that we are faced with a situation where a mine closed two days ago, and it is expected that another one will be closed on July 1. A lot of individuals are going to be out of work, with the result that two or three communities in Cape Breton island and, indeed, the whole economy of the province of Nova Scotia, is going to be affected if this situation is allowed to continue without something being done to provide alternative employment. I suggest that is the real problem.

The hon. gentleman has suggested everything which is possible to be done is being done to keep the mines open. Of course, that is not true, because the hon. gentleman knows very well when the delegation came up to

Ottawa from Cape Breton early this month—I do not think the hon. member will contradict Mr. Shea—

Mr. MacInnis: The hon. member for Cape Breton South will contradict him.

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps the hon. member should hear what he is contradicting before he does so.

Mr. MacInnis: I will contradict it in any event.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Pickersgill: I should like to refer to an article written by Mr. Harold Shea, an individual who most of us in this house believe to be a very accurate reporter. Mr. Harold Shea had the following to say, as reported in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* of May 13, 1961.

Mr. MacInnis: That is last month.

Mr. MacLellan: That was last month, not this month.

Mr. Pickersgill: Well, the hon. member has me there, it was last month. In any event, Mr Shea had the following to say:

Two federal cabinet ministers declared Friday that Ottawa would put up the money to keep three Cape Breton mines in business beyond announced closure dates if Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation would accept.

Those are Mr Shea's words, of course. The article then continues as follows:

This statement, made to a Cape Breton delegation of municipal officials, clergymen and union officials, was regarded as a direct challenge to Dosco to make "a reasonable proposal".

National revenue minister Nowlan, who chaired the meeting of cabinet ministers and delegation, assured "We will not stint on the money—we'll do everything that is humanly possible".

This article then refers to a statement made by the Minister of Labour, and reads as follows:

Labour minister Starr said: "The big problem is to convince the company to keep the mines open. We'll pay the bill."

When I asked the minister whether that was what he said, and whether that was the policy of the government, he waseled on that statement.

Mr. Starr: Mr. Chairman, I must rise on a question of privilege. I cannot accept the description given by the hon. member in this respect. I gave him an answer.

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, the hon. gentleman gave an answer all right and I will put his answer on the record because it really was a classic. It was the kind of answer that you get from straightforward people to straightforward questions.