

*Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys*

been using coal today rather than the oil that is being used. That was the Liberal policy. It would have meant a very much greater consumption of coal than there is at the present time. Those are facts that cannot be gainsaid.

This is past history, and it is not going to provide any jobs in Cape Breton or in Pictou county at the present time. I agree with the hon. member for Pictou that it is just as important to provide jobs for displaced miners in Pictou county as in Cape Breton. It is every bit as important. They are two areas which, with the town of Springhill, have suffered very seriously because of the decline in the coal industry, and I do not think there is any doubt that some of that decline could have been prevented.

That is why Mr. St. Laurent, with that honesty which was so characteristic of him, refused to say things that he did not believe would happen. He said at Fredericton that he would not say that the production of coal was going to be increased because he did not think it would be possible, and he was right because surely this government would have tried to carry out that promise if there had been any hope of doing so. What the Tory advertisement never gave him credit for saying, and what he did say which was very important, was:

Now will maritime coal continue to be the cheapest fuel for the production of power for all time? I do not think it will. I think that coal is going to become more valuable for chemical, synthetical processes than it will be as a fuel.

I hope Mr. St. Laurent was right. If the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition in the house on July 1, 1958 had been followed and an intensive program of research into new uses for coal had been initiated at that time, we would have been three years further along the road; but like every other suggestion it was ignored by hon. gentlemen opposite. Mr. St. Laurent said:

I think that coal is going to become more valuable for chemical, synthetical processes than it will be as a fuel. In the meantime, of course, we want these coal mines kept in operation—

That is what he said.

—because we do not want the coal mining towns to become ghost towns.

Mr. St. Laurent and the St. Laurent government, of course, had a record. We had faced a similar situation in the gold mines, and we had met that situation and prevented those towns from becoming ghost towns. That was the position of the Liberal party, and it took the same position with respect to the coal mines. Our position was not like that of hon. gentlemen opposite who, when a mine goes out or when there is no longer a market for the production of a mine, let these towns

become ghost towns or say "Let the province solve the problem" or wring their hands and say they do not know what to do next. Mr. St. Laurent said, "We do not want the coal mining towns to become ghost towns". Then he went on to make this statement which, as events have shown, was thoroughly justified:

But as far as I am concerned, and as far as my opinion may carry weight in the decisions that are taken, we are not going to encourage a substantial increase in the production of coal because I do not think that that would be fair to the future generations of Canadians.

I do not think it would have been fair, as it has turned out, to the present generation of Canadians to hold up false and visionary hopes which obviously could not be realized. I do say that I could not help but be impressed by a letter I read in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* yesterday. A suggestion was made which I put to hon. gentlemen opposite and particularly to the minister and to the coal board. The letter suggested that we should give consideration now to erecting another thermal plant in the coal fields. It is true that there is no great demand for electricity at the present time in the province of Nova Scotia. That is quite true, though there is some demand, because the Nova Scotia Light and Power Company at this very moment is considering a hydro development for stand-by power. That is rather extraordinary in the light of the coal situation in Nova Scotia. I believe consideration should be given to the possibility suggested in the letter I have mentioned.

I am not sure whether it is feasible, but these things have to be studied and explored, and they should be studied and explored before a crisis arises and not afterward. We do know that methods have been devised now for the transmission of electricity over quite long distances, and it seems to me that it would be very much better from every point of view, rather than paying a subvention to carry coal to Ontario to make power there, where there may not be a continuing market, to build a plant right in Cape Breton and develop power there and, if necessary, transmit it by high voltage lines through the system generally.

We know that the present premier of Quebec and the present premier of New Brunswick are now engaged in negotiating for inter-connecting lines similar to those that exist between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and when that exchange is completed it will be possible to transmit power back and forth from Ontario hydro to Cape Breton island because it will all be interconnected by a single eastern Canadian grid. That is a great advance, and it is another development of the policy that Mr. Harris announced in his budget speech on March 14, 1957.