

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 18, 1967

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. SAUVÉ—SPEECH RESPECTING NOVA
SCOTIA ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Hon. Maurice Sauvé (Minister of Forestry and Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Questions were raised in the house yesterday concerning my speech on Monday in Banff to the national conference on the economics of unity. I should like to inform the members of the house of my exact remarks, which I feel were misconstrued during the question period yesterday. My exact words at Banff were:

Our planning problem is to synchronize the phasing out of coal mining and steel production in the greater Sydney area, the encouragement of new industrial developments along the Canso Strait and structural adjustment in rural areas in such a way that we attain the maximum regional economic development impact. This requires, among other alternatives, guiding the surplus rural population, displaced coal miners and steel workers to new jobs in the Canso area. To accomplish this will require co-ordinated structural changes in the economy.

As these remarks make clear, I was speaking about the general economic development problems in Nova Scotia and our search for solutions to these problems. At no place in my speech did I mention the announcement made by Dosco last Friday, nor did I discuss the situation which results from that announcement. I was outlining the task that faces the planners in Nova Scotia and the types of things, if a development program were agreed upon, to which they would have to address themselves. I was not announcing any government decision.

As the minister responsible for rural development one of my responsibilities is to be concerned with the elaboration of regional development plans. Discussions with the government of Nova Scotia on the establishment of such a plan for eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton were started in the spring of 1965, and preliminary reports on the area were submitted to the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia on January 31, 1967.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege raised by the minister, there is no question but that he is referring to questions I put to the cabinet yesterday. The confusion here arises from the answer by the Minister of Industry (Mr. Drury) when, as reported at page 3167 of *Hansard*, in reply to a question in respect of planning he said this:

The plan to close was announced, not as a plan of the government but as a plan of the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation. Consequently the government is not formulating plans—

I repeat "is not formulating plans."

—to close the operation. As yet we are not in a position to say intelligently what should be done. I would be not only imprudent but, I think, stupid to try to indicate to the hon. member that we now know all the answers.

The minister of forestry has raised a question of privilege in respect of remarks he made at Banff regarding the Sydney steel operation, a situation which the government only became aware of on Thursday last. I specifically draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the minister's own words when he said:

Our planning problem is to synchronize the phasing out of coal mining and steel production in the greater Sydney area—

I emphasize the phrase "phasing out". There is no question or doubt about it; these are the minister's own words quoted by him a moment ago, completely contradicted by the Minister of Industry yesterday in this house and contradicted by other ministers of the government who have implied and said publicly that they fully intend to do everything possible to keep the Sydney operation in existence.

● (2:40 p.m.)

Yesterday I asked the government whether the remarks made in Banff by the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development were government policy. That question is still foremost in my mind, as I am sure it is in the mind of every member of this house, in view of the fact that there is a contradiction between the public statements made outside this house by several ministers and the statement made in the house by the Minister of Industry. Therefore if the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development feels he has a