

*Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys*

lucid, apt and correct comment that made me feel he was quite correct in the point he made to me that at no time has the Canadian Metal Mining Association made representations to the government that they did not want the department to be active in research in the particular field of metal mining. My remarks are not in the nature of an apology but just to put the record straight by indicating that as a result of a press report I misinterpreted their position.

With respect to research I should like to ask the minister if he can tell us how the mines branch is coming along in carrying out the recommendations that were made two years ago by the mines, forests and waters committee about expansion of its activities. These sum up fairly well the questions I want to put to the minister. I hope he is in a position to answer several of them now. If he is not, I would appreciate a reply by letter.

**Mr. Comtois:** Mr. Chairman, I will begin by going back to the question of inspectors. The hon. member for Timiskaming referred to the experience of the inspectors. I can tell him that one of them has 17 years' experience in mining, five of which were in gold mining. The other inspector has about 25 years' operating experience in mining; previous inspectors have also had long experience in the mining industry. We are very careful to have experienced men for inspection purposes. There would be no point in doing otherwise. It is perfectly useless to have inexperienced inspectors going into mines and to expect that such inspectors would make an accurate report.

**Mr. Peters:** May I ask a question? Approximately how many working days did they spend in underground operations last year?

**Mr. Comtois:** We do not have that information available here but I will provide the hon. member with the answer as soon as I can get it. The hon. member for Port Arthur referred to stockpiling and the matter of liaison between my department and the Department of Defence Production. He referred to liaison on the part of my department with regard to the question of timeliness in the disposal of stockpiles having regard to current prices and marketing opportunities. Our advice is sought at the time but the decision is taken by the Department of Defence Production. We do not have to look after that matter. It comes under the authority of my colleague. As far as we are concerned, we give advice. We give the information that is required but the sale or disposal of these materials is not our concern and does not come under our authority.

The hon. member referred to the zinc refinery in Quebec. I will not deal with what the hon. member said about my province. There is no point in bringing provincial politics into the matter. I know that the hon. member likes to do that. He likes to play in muddy waters. It has become more or less a habit for him, and all members of the house know how he likes that. He is not going to drag me into it because it is not my business. The same principle applies to the question of the zinc refinery in northern Quebec. When a company decides to proceed with the building of a refinery the only thing it has to get is a permit from the province. We do not have to interfere. It is a provincial matter and at my age I know how to mind my own business.

**Mr. Herridge:** Mr. Chairman, I have three or four simple questions to ask the minister on this item because I have always been interested in the relationship between mines branch research and private industry. Can he tell the committee who decides what projects will be undertaken? Are they a matter of decision for the mines branch officials alone or do they take advice or suggestions from private industry? Do employees of private industry spend some time in the research section of the mines branch and, if so, under what arrangements? Are the results of research provided gratis to private industry wherever it may be? Does the department ever obtain any patents based upon the results of research that is undertaken?

**Mr. Comtois:** Before answering this last point, Mr. Chairman, I should like to refer to the question about inspectors asked by the hon. member for Timiskaming. I did not have the information when he asked his question. I wish to inform him that our gold mines inspectors made spot investigations this year amounting to 13 underground inspections out of 40 mines inspected to date. Each underground inspection takes about half a day. I hope this answers the question raised by the hon. member.

**Mr. Peters:** We are very glad to hear this, Mr. Chairman, and I presume the record is better than it has been in the past. We are grateful to the minister for what has been done. I think those mines that need this assistance badly are interested in seeing that it is given on an honest basis. I think they will appreciate these inspections.

**Mr. Comtois:** In order to complete my answer, I might add that two inspectors go underground at the same time, not one inspector alone.

**Mr. Dumas:** In view of the fact the hon. member for Port Arthur mentioned my name