

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Time does not permit me to go into some of the other objections I have to what is going on in respect of the early retirement plan but I assure the minister I shall continue to put them before him at every opportunity.

Mr. Russell C. Honey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Regional and Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I think there may be some confusion. I should like briefly in the time available to me to outline the steps taken with reference to this plan. The hon. member has been fair in expressing his concern, but I also believe he is acquainted with the background situation and the reason for the establishment of Devco Corporation and the steps it has taken.

The plan we are talking about is, of course, well known to the hon. member and to all members of the house. This has been the case since November 18 of last year when it was tabled in the House of Commons. The formal step to implement the plan—in effect, to permit payment of moneys under the plan—was taken today. Section 18, subsection (3), of the legislation provided that this step could be taken only with approval of Treasury Board, and as my hon. friend has mentioned this step was taken today.

● (10:20 p.m.)

My hon. friend referred at some length to what he called the compulsory retirement of miners at age 60 and over. As I mentioned when replying to the question a couple of days ago, it is rather interesting that in the age group 55 to 59, where the workers have an election to remain as employees or to take a pension, 77½ per cent of the employees indicated to Devco that they would like to take the retirement plan. I mention that

because I think it is important in light of what my hon. friend has said. I think it would be a fair inference to draw, and I would be prepared to draw it, that if an election were given to those in the age group 60 and over, the percentage would be somewhat higher than the 77½ per cent in the case of those employees in the 55 to 59 age group.

My hon. friend also mentioned the question of notice, and I can assure him on that. The legislation does not provide any requirement for notice to be given. The letters that were sent out to the employees were sent as a matter of courtesy only. The letters were quite explicit that the notice was conditional upon the plan being approved; it was necessary, of course, that the plan be approved by Treasury Board. Therefore, Devco could in fact have implemented the plan without any notice. I think it would have been unfair for them to have done so, but under the law they could have done so. I feel that they have been very fair in giving a month's notice of their intention, because it was not necessary for them to give this notice.

Since my hon. friend has on other occasions raised the question of the legality of the action of the Devco corporation, I should like to tell him I have been assured by the law officers of the crown that every action has been entirely proper and legal. As I have already indicated, the notice that was given was as a matter of courtesy only. To answer my hon. friend's question specifically, there is no requirement for additional notice to be given.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.26 p.m.