

Coal Production Assistance Act

demonstrate the positive action this government takes to assist any sector of our economy that may be encountering difficulties.

Mr. H. R. MacEwan (Pictou): Mr. Speaker—

An hon. Member: What's the matter? Don't you want it to go through?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that any of those remarks by hon. members who have not got the floor in regard to hon. members rising from any part of the house are quite improper. I think we have got over the week end. We saw a fair amount of cheering and heckling one way or another and I believe we can now conduct our business without that.

Mr. MacEwan: I am sure my constituents in the county Pictou will appreciate the fact that certain hon. members opposite do not want to hear me make representations on their behalf. I listened with interest to the remarks of the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys. During the few years I have been in this house I have listened to some of the other ministers; I commend the present minister in this regard. He is minister of mines and also the minister responsible for technical surveys. I have had something to do with the hon. gentleman in that respect and I am sure he will show great sympathy for our problems in a field which is so important to the maritime provinces. We are now being asked to consider the amendment of the Coal Production Assistance Act. The history of this act was given by the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond (Mr. MacEachen). As we all know, amendments are necessary from time to time in connection with this important act so as to keep various measures flexible. Coal mining is still an important industry in Canada. It is a very tough industry. Acts such as the one we are considering are most necessary to provide needed funds to the various companies. I understand, having spoken to officials of the dominion coal board several years ago, that this act provides for assistance to mines presently in production. As far as I know it does not include within its ambit the lending of money for the mechanization of new mines. I am sure, of course, that if new mines were opened in a constituency such as my own, or in any part of Cape Breton island or, for that matter, in this country, the government would not hesitate to bring in an amendment to make the act apply to new mines as well.

The mechanization of mines is most important, as was emphasized by the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond. It is true that the mechanization of coal mines in Nova Scotia, particularly by the Dominion Coal

Company, has not proved as successful as was hoped, but it was none the less absolutely necessary. This has been proved by the experience in the MacBean mine in my own area which has been turned, by mechanization, into an efficient operation. In the last number of years, as far as I can recall, there has been no lost time in that mine.

I listened to the remarks of the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Robichaud) when he spoke about the great provincial government in New Brunswick which was co-operating with the mining industry by setting up a thermal plant. May I point out that the government of the province of Nova Scotia operates a thermal plant at Trenton in my area and that this same government with the assistance of the Atlantic Provinces Power Development Act has provided for an extension to that plant costing several million dollars, and for transmission lines both within the province and between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This plant has been a godsend to us because it takes a great deal of the production of the MacBean mine, the Greenwood mine and the Drummond mine.

Finally, I noted that the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria (Mr. Muir) put forward a submission that if a new wash plant was needed in his area this should be provided. And in the *Montreal Gazette* of November of this year, Mr. A. L. Fairley, president of the Dominion Coal Company is reported to have said—I will paraphrase his words—that there are new bright spots on the horizon for the coal industry which it was hoped would serve to make up any losses. There was already a halt in the sales decline.

Mr. Fairley went on to say:

Now it is planned to spend more money on capital improvement and modernization in the immediate future. Capital expenditures over the next few years will be increased at a rate somewhat above that which has existed during the past three years.

Again, I commend the minister on the introduction of amendments to this important act. I know it applies to the province of New Brunswick among others and that it is important for the mines in that area. As I have already stated, the revision of acts such as this must constantly be kept in mind as must be measures such as the Atlantic Provinces Development Act which has helped to bring cheap power to the maritimes while at the same time helping our coal producers. Submissions will, I know, be made to the government from time to time to keep a watchful eye on these matters, to be flexible and ready to come forward with improvements to legislation which is most important to the maritime provinces as well as to other parts of this country, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Moose Mountain (Mr. Southam).