

Supply—Regional Development

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to sound officious but may I point out that I know something about the background of developments in Cape Breton. Actually the pension payable by Dominion Coal Company to Dosco coal workers is not a contributory plan. It is a very modest pension. For many years efforts have been made by governments of Nova Scotia to get a contributory pension plan established. The government of Nova Scotia more than 20 years ago offered to contribute toward coal royalties, under a three-way business arrangement, in order to get a contributory pension plan established. For a variety of reasons it was not so established. Any pension payable by the coal company—

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Was at the will of the coal company.

Mr. Stanfield: As one hon. member says, it was at the will of the coal company. The pension was not contributory and was quite inadequate.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Chairman, at one time I argued before the Minister of Finance that Dominion Coal Company did not pay a pension to its employees but a gratuity. The minister saw fit to tax that gratuity.

In my general remarks earlier this afternoon I hope I did not leave the impression that everything is wrong with the Cape Breton Development Corporation. The minister took that interpretation and, by shouting the way he did, only succeeded in drowning out the House of Commons interpreter.

Several of the minister's remarks are in complete disagreement with certain answers he gave to my hon. friend from the N.D.P. The minister referred to negotiations with the unions. A thin line must be drawn between negotiations and discussions. As the vice-president in charge of coal said at one time, there is nothing in the legislation requiring Devco to negotiate with the unions. I asked him whether the matter we are interested in this afternoon had at any time been discussed and he said, yes, it had been discussed with about 90 per cent of the members of one union but not with the members of all unions involved. The hon. member from the N.D.P. asked a question about this matter. I understand that only one union was involved. I think it is correct to say that a retirement plan was drawn up and presented to the United Mine Workers for approval. Possibly such a plan was presented to other unions, but there was absolutely no negotiation.

[Mr. Skoberg.]

When the minister says that there have been negotiations with unions I think it will be found that he erred.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Chairman, I do not understand in what I am wrong. Is it because I used the word "unions"?

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): I think the minister referred to negotiations or discussions with the unions involved. This is not the case. I think it will be established by reading the reports of the area development committee that this was not a negotiated plan. According to the information presented to the committee, this plan was drawn up and presented for approval.

The minister spoke of how well Cape Bretoners are treated, implying that we ought to be most grateful for the grant which the federal government pays toward maintenance of coal operations. I think reference was made to a subsidy having been paid over a period of 40 years. By the same token, would it not be interesting to look at the protection afforded the uranium industry in which the Prime Minister is personally involved, since part of that industry has dealings with his constituency?

An hon. Member: Cheap.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): At the same time let us look at that colossal white elephant which will require subsidies, subventions or what have you from now until eternity. I speak of the St. Lawrence seaway which was to benefit the area between Montreal and Toronto.

An hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Did anyone ever say clearly what the cost would be to support this white elephant? We hear talk about subventions on coal over the years. What was invested in the seaway? More than \$500 million, and it will be a burden on the Canadian taxpayer forever. If they want to begin cutting out these things which they claim they are supporting, why not cut out the seaway?

• (5:50 p.m.)

I see some hon. members are laughing. I invite them to check into this. They will be able to verify my statement that the seaway was built for the purpose of providing hydro for the sake of Ontario and Quebec. It was supposed to bring the farmers six cents more on every bushel of grain sold. But the farmers have the same problem today as they did then. It has been before the house day after