

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

in the area represents one of the most generous provisions ever made by any government in a case of this sort. Certainly it is much more generous than anything done by the previous administration which sat by and watched mines close without making any attempt to provide alternative employment.

I should like to repeat that the people of the coal mining areas appreciate very much the many hours of work and the long nights spent by the hon. member for Cape Breton South in his attempt to save the mines in his constituency. The people of Cape Breton North and Victoria also understand how much work has been done on their behalf by the hon. member who represents that riding, and how earnestly the members from the area as a whole, together with other supporters of the government, have sought to meet this particular problem. They also know that if they must choose between the attitude this government has displayed, since it came into power, in trying to do everything it could, and the attitude of the former administration, to benefit they must choose the attitude of this administration.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to take very much longer, but I must take issue with one or two statements made by the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond.

First of all, instead of reading the words of this advertisement as they are, he attempted to put a gloss on them, and to suggest that I said something other than the words that are used. I should like to read those words again. I shall not read the whole advertisement, only the relevant parts which have directly to do with coal. Premier Stanfield is quoted in this advertisement as follows:

The Prime Minister, as a matter of policy, has set his face against the expansion of the coal industry in Nova Scotia—

Mr. MacLellan: Is that not true?

Mr. Pickersgill: The advertisement then goes on as follows:

And on no issue is there greater disagreement than our stand on coal policy and the position taken by the Liberal party.

The hon. member has tried to weasel out of that statement by suggesting they did not promise to increase coal production. However, let me read the following statement appearing in the advertisement:

But the statements of Prime Minister St. Laurent on the subject of coal production are an issue! Your Progressive Conservative candidates are in favour of a coal policy that will increase coal production!

There is certainly no mention of the words "if possible" in that advertisement, as has been insinuated by the hon. member. There was no question of it being "possible" before

[Mr. MacLellan.]

June 10, 1957. The hon. member has thought of that qualification this afternoon.

The fact of the matter is that they were either so ignorant they made those promises in good faith, or they were perpetrating a fraud. They can take it either way, and I do not much care which way they choose. The plain fact is that the people were led to believe that there would be an increase in coal production.

The hon. gentleman has said that this government has done its best, but I do not think it has done its best. The hon. gentleman also says that everyone knew that coal markets were shrinking. If everyone knew in 1955, 1956 and 1957 that coal markets were shrinking, why did the Prime Minister and the Tory candidates of those provinces promise an increase in production? If they were aware that the markets were shrinking, why did they promise to increase the production of maritime coal? Why did they not tell the people the true situation? I think the difficulty with which we are now faced in this regard has resulted from those promises made at that time.

The hon. gentleman has taken issue this afternoon with what I said in regard to the thermal plant in Saint John. I must say that I thought the hon. gentleman—I do not accuse him of doing it deliberately—did misrepresent what I had said. He also completely misrepresented the position taken by the St. Laurent government in June of 1957.

Mr. MacLellan: What date in June?

Mr. Pickersgill: I suggest it does not make any difference what date it was in June, so long as it was before June 10, while they were in a position to carry out their undertaking. Mr. Lesage said, quite properly, when the policy was announced, that coal was cheaper than oil and there was no need to cross the bridge until it was reached. However, such a hullabaloo was made about the situation, along with many misrepresentations, that the government made a formal decision in respect of a hypothetical situation.

Mr. MacLellan: Yes, and everybody else knew—

Mr. Pickersgill: Perhaps the hon. gentleman will allow me to continue and correct whatever he thinks I have said wrong when I am finished.

The Liberal government took the formal position that if oil became cheaper than coal, no matter what price it reached, the government would pay the necessary subsidy so that coal could continue to be used. That was the statement made by the St. Laurent government. I suggest if that policy had been adhered to by the present government, so that