

*Adjournment Motion*

ter that when he goes down to meet with the representatives of the miners and the DEVCO coal officials, he might suggest that they invite Mr. Alex Brown, former special adviser to the federal government on the coal industry, a Cape Breton native and long time friend of Cape Breton coal miners, to chair the meeting between the groups.

In fact I would go so far as to suggest to the new minister that he try to bring the parties together in an all day session under the chairmanship of Mr. Brown to discuss the production and marketing problems of DEVCO, as well as the safety and industrial relations problems. Such a meeting would do a considerable amount to improve the relations between DEVCO and the union, which fell to a bit of a low after the fire in No. 26 mine and the temporary lay-off of some 750 men, of whom I understand all but 275 are now back to work.

The end of this month or early in December seems to be a good time for such a meeting and an airing of mutual problems, suspicions, criticisms, and goals. While I have a good deal of respect for what Mr. Kent has done in comparison with past executives of DEVCO, I feel that some of Mr. Marsh's complaints, which he aired publicly after the No. 26 mine fire, should be seriously considered. Mr. Marsh, the president of district 26 of the UMW since about 1958, has asked for the opening of three coal mines. Mr. Kent has said that there would be only one more new coal mine opened to 1980 which would mean production of some five million tons.

● (2210)

It seems to me that at least two mines in the area could be added—given the uncertainty of No. 26 even under the best of circumstances—and given the high unemployment rate in the area. Likewise, I think that Mr. Marsh's complaint that the present Minister of Finance's (Mr. Macdonald) alleged remark when he was minister of energy, mines and resources that Nova Scotia should depend more for its power on nuclear energy than on coal, should be clarified and explained.

There are many other union management concerns such as safety and industrial relations, that at this particular time should be seriously debated under the direction and guidance of Mr. Brown. I say this because the Cape Breton coal industry is at a turning point where it can go from being an industry totally dependent on the Canadian taxpayer to one in which it can tend toward the breakeven point and indeed even have an operating profit within the next several years. That conclusion can only become a reality if there is an extremely high degree of co-operation on means and ends by labour and management in the Cape Breton coal industry. Given the situation of the past few months I strongly urge the new minister to do everything in his power to get the two groups together at an early date, and preferably under the guidance and direction of Mr. Brown in a closed meeting.

**Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Madam Speaker, I am sure we all regret that the progress of the Cape Breton coal industry has suffered a setback because of the fire last June in a newly developed section of Number 26 colliery. But the setback, though serious, is only temporary. It does not in any way change Devco's policy for the modernization of the industry, and the government's approval of the program is unchanged.

[Mr. Hogan.]

It is regrettable but understandable that the setback should have produced some doubt and misunderstanding particularly among the workers. In that situation the suggested meeting seems to be a good idea. I understand that it would be a break from the long standing precedents in the industry, whereby only the top union officials meet with top management, and the locals with management at the individual mines. To get all levels together around one table would, I know, be warmly welcomed by the corporation, and I hope that they and the union will arrange it.

I certainly want to visit Cape Breton as soon as possible to see the industry, to go down the mine and speak with the workers and their leaders. I am not sure at this point in time, however, whether it would be the best thing for me to go and have this meeting. Nevertheless, I think the meeting should be arranged, and if I am not able to attend I will do my utmost to be there as soon as possible afterward to discuss matters.

As to the involvement of Mr. Brown as suggested by the hon. member, I understand that he is an experienced and able man now retired from his position with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. I would certainly think he could be helpful as an independent participant if that is the wish of both groups.

I will do my best to make sure that this meeting takes place as soon as possible, and take all steps to see that Mr. Brown participates if all parties agree. As suggested, it might be a good idea for Mr. Brown to chair that meeting as an independent participant.

VETERANS AFFAIRS—PRISONERS OF WAR—DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEE

**Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and I collaborated on questions put to the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) on October 15 to find out the position of the government with regard to the proposed legislation under a new act of parliament to compensate veterans who were former prisoners of war.

There is not much that I can add to what my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said in the House on October 27, when he took the matter up, only to try to impress again on the government through the minister and to appeal to him again that this legislation be brought forward as soon as possible and, hopefully, before the Christmas recess.

Since I have the time, Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat the recommendations that came about as a result of long study of the Hermann report and the many representations that came before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. The committee recommended in part, as recorded on page 628 of *Votes and Proceedings* for June 12, 1975:

(1) That a new act of parliament be enacted to provide compensation to all former prisoners of war. The effect of this would be to retain the principle in the Pension Act that payment of wartime disability pension be restricted to those instances where injury or disease or aggravation thereof was attributable to or incurred during military service, and that special compensation for the maltreatment, indignities and residual disabilities resulting from prisoner of war incarceration which cannot be recognized or identified would be payable under a separate act.