

*Supply—Regional Development*

third paragraph of the preamble again, Mr. Chairman; it says:

The aim of the corporation of—

[*English*]

—in the Sydney coalfield and reorganize and operate the mines with a view to the rationalization of coal production therefrom and the progressive withdrawal of the corporation from such production in accordance with a plan that takes into account progress in providing employment outside the coal producing industry and in broadening the base of the Island's economy;

[*Translation*]

Is that not clear? That is what it means.

However, the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond reads it and says just the opposite. He says: "You can see that the aim is not to stop operating the coal mines". What can one do? I thought it was only when I spoke French that he did not understand, but apparently he does not understand me when I speak English either. Therefore I might as well give up.

[*English*]

**Mr. Skoberg:** Mr. Chairman, I am glad to hear the clap. I am sure this means that the Liberal members have not read the report of the hearing. I have one direct question for the minister. I am given to understand that the miners may be on their annual vacation as of December 20. I wonder whether this is correct.

**Mr. Marchand (Langelier):** Yes, I guess so, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Skoberg:** I am also given to understand that on January 2 the pre-retirement plan will be effective for the miners. They are to be given their holidays at that time and the pre-retirement plan will then go into effect.

**Mr. Marchand (Langelier):** I would not like to give any definite answer at this stage because there are still discussions taking place between Devco and the unions. I have no final report on this and, therefore, I would not like to say that this will happen in December or at the beginning of January, because it might be otherwise if there is some different understanding.

**Mr. Skoberg:** Before the dinner hour the minister nodded his head in agreement when I asked if he would answer any general representation particularly from the rail union people such as telegraphers, trainmen and engineers. Would the minister give the assurance that there will be no pre-retirement

plan before all the representatives have had an opportunity to appear before him.

**Mr. Marchand (Langelier):** I have already met with the representatives of those unions. If they want to see me again I am ready to see them. If the miners reach an agreement with Devco on the pre-retirement plan I cannot say that I will postpone the implementation of this understanding. But I do say that before anything is done for those employees I am ready to wait until I have met with the representatives of those unions.

**Mr. Skoberg:** If I understood the minister correctly, this could become effective for the miners as of January 1—I am referring to the pre-retirement plan—but not necessarily so for these other employees to whom I have referred. Is that correct?

**Mr. Marchand (Langelier):** It will depend on the agreement Devco can reach with either the mine workers or the other groups. This I do not know. If the railway groups are not satisfied and wish to present arguments I can assure you that no final decision will be taken by Devco before I have met and discussed this with the railway employees.

• (8:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Skoberg:** I am sure that cleared this up and I thank the minister. I am also quite sure the minister will realize that the Canadian railway labour and executive association intend to meet with the minister in this regard.

My other question relates to whether the pensions for pre-retirement, being \$2,400 for single individuals and \$3,000 for married employees will bear any relationship to the number of children the married men may have. A married couple may have one child or ten children. I also understand that unemployment insurance benefits will be included in this package of \$3,000 or \$2,400. Is that correct?

**Mr. Marchand (Langelier):** That is correct.

**Mr. Skoberg:** Do the ministers feel it is fair and just for these people in this country to pay into this fund, from which they expect to derive benefits, and have those benefits included in this package deal for pre-retirement benefits? These people have paid into the fund for many years. Does the minister think it is fair to use this part of the fund in order to provide these pre-retirement pensions? I should like to ask the minister to