

*Adjournment Debate*

not want unemployment insurance; they want jobs, they want to be productive. This government has denied them the opportunity to work and be productive.

It is not as if a stockpile would have been a bad investment, because officials of the companies involved all say publicly that the nickel markets look healthy in the medium to long term. Even a recent study by G. A. Barry and G. E. Wood of the minister's department says the same thing. But the government will not act to stockpile nickel, an action it has undertaken profitably in the past with uranium.

The government also refuses to take steps to prevent such a crisis in the future. At a time when Canada and the Sudbury basin desperately needed money for investment in job producing secondary industry, Inco was exporting hundreds of millions of dollars made from profits in Canada to invest in new mines abroad. What did the government do about this? It gave the company another \$77 million to help it on its way. This was \$77 million of taxpayers' money paid in taxes by the workers who become unemployed next Monday.

● (2222)

The government would not even take steps to protect jobs in Canada. My party requested a temporary tariff on nickel carbonate coming into Canada destined for the Sherritt Gordon refinery at Fort Saskatchewan. It would not put that temporary tariff on raw nickel coming into Canada even though the Japanese have been protecting their nickel industries with temporary tariffs of 13 per cent for the last few years. The government would not even stop the import of that nickel into Canada, yet that nickel is processed in the Sherritt Gordon refinery. The irony of it all is that it is sold to our mint in Winnipeg to make our coinage, and this at a time when we have raw nickel stockpiled to our eyeballs in Port Colborne and Sudbury.

This is the same kind of brutal unconcern that permits this government to allow Alcan to close out a mine in St. Lawrence, Newfoundland because the mine is not making as much money as it would make if it were importing the fluorspar from Mexico. Yet this government has given Alcan \$200 million in deferred taxes. We heard earlier tonight that this government through the EDC is lending Alcan \$30 million to build a plant in Ireland. I wonder by what stretch of the imagination the government can now turn around and put Ireland in the same category as Guatemala and Indonesia. I suppose Ireland is a third world country and we are now helping third world Ireland with this low interest loan.

The government could have come up with specific proposals to save the jobs of our miners. It could have stockpiled nickel in the short-term and made a profit. It could have imposed a temporary tariff which would have saved some jobs in the nickel mining industry. Most important, over the years that this government has been in power it could have initiated economic planning that would have prevented companies from such criminal acts as deliberately stockpiling nickel to gamble on future markets and then using the stockpile as a weapon in wage negotiations with the workers. This government could

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

have prevented the companies from making the workers pay for the companies' own economic mismanagement. The government could have used ownership or taxation of our resources to make sure there was an adequate pool of investment capital here in Canada to ensure jobs in manufacturing and to diversify the economies of one-industry towns such as Sudbury and Thompson.

Truly this government is tired; it has grown fat and sassy. It is like a ship struggling through the water, barnacles hanging from its bottom and impeding its progress. Members opposite have to be completely out of touch with the citizenry of Canada to be able to sit so insensitively on the government benches while Canadian workers are discarded like so many used pieces of tissue. This government in its repeated failure to act has surely earned and richly deserves the scorn of the Canadian people at the polls whenever an election should come.

**Mr. Ken Robinson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I must say that the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) has been extremely eloquent, as he usually is, and has made his case extremely well. It is very tough to say anything when you are talking about 4,000 people out of work in a constituency. I assure the hon. member that I share his concern because I have Anaconda in my riding where there may be 875 laid off; I have Christie's Bread in my riding where there may be another 500 laid off; and I have Continental Can which is having some problems as well. I hope I do not have to continue.

I share the hon. member's concern; this matter is very, very important, indeed. I do know that the minister, his department and the government share the hon. member's concern as well. The question is, how do we remedy the situation? Time would probably not permit us to go into that in detail.

In response to the question of the hon. member for Nickel Belt, need I point out that the mining industry, one of this country's great exporting industries, is dependent upon customers outside Canada. Manpower shortages in periods of peak demand, or conversely, surpluses during depressed mineral markets, are characteristic of mining.

● (2227)

At the moment, as my hon. colleague has already been told, copper, nickel and zinc, as well as the people who mine them, are being especially hard hit. Yet this is not a reflection of the entire state of the mineral market. The year 1977 brought widely divergent fortunes to different sections of the mining industry. While excessive stocks are keeping prices down in the commodities I have just mentioned, the demand for molybdenum and tungsten is very firm while aluminum's recovery continues. In addition, it might be added that the price of gold has also risen.

Because of this, cutbacks in the labour force are related to soft markets. These lay-offs are not in line with government objectives, although from the corporate point of view they may