

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

is because of my objections to this portion of the plan, which will compulsorily retire men at the age of 60 from their work in the Cape Breton coal mines, that I have been persistent in bringing this matter to the attention of the minister.

On October 1 Devco submitted their pre-retirement leave plan to the government and on page 3, paragraph 3 of the press release concerning the plan, reference is made to the fact the plan is authorized under section 18 of the act. Section 18 of the act does not authorize anything. This plan cannot be officially sanctioned until the Treasury Board approves it. Confirmation of this fact can be found in the act where approval of the Treasury Board is made absolutely necessary to sanction this plan.

I have continued to object to the compulsory part of this plan, and to certain other developments the most recent one of which is the notice sent out to the employees who would be either compulsorily or voluntarily retiring under the plan to which a question and answer section was attached by Devco. I find a mistaken statement in it according to which the false impression is left that the bill as approved by parliament is now law, and that it supersedes collective agreements. This is a mistake because, to my knowledge, that bill did not become law until today. It is a matter which the minister assured me yesterday the Treasury Board will look after, and I understand this has been the case.

I continue to object to the early and compulsory retirement of miners and Devco employees at the age of 60. I ask that the minister, at his convenience, provide the house with information as to whether Devco will have to give a further notice because, after all, since the legislation became effective only today it follows that another notice will be required. Yesterday the minister indicated this might be the case when he referred to the fact that there was no reason why the notices sent out to the miners and employees involved could not be cancelled.

I do not wish to address my remarks solely to the parliamentary secretary, but also to others who are listening and who can possibly take action on this situation. Devco and the government should withdraw the compulsory element in this early retirement plan for obvious reasons. For one thing, unless it is withdrawn, those concerned are denying the statement made by the minister on January 14.

[Mr. MacInnis.]

This brings me to another matter which makes the communication of October 1 wrong. Since then, on many occasions and as late as January 15, the minister has reported that negotiations were still being carried on with one of the unions affected. Since these negotiations are in progress the announcement by Devco of the pre-retirement plan is not in accord with the facts. The minister indicated on January 15 that this matter was still being dealt with. I refer to page 4327 of *Hansard* where the minister is reported as saying, in answer to questions about the retirement plan and negotiations with the unions:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, negotiations are still going on. I think the union representatives are attending a meeting this week or next week.

Again, this would indicate that the facts as presented by Devco were not accurate, or not in accord with what the minister was telling us.

Another reason why the compulsory element should be withdrawn, is this. On page 4245 of *Hansard* of January 14 I am recorded as having asked the minister whether Devco would honour the general agreements which were in effect at the time it took over from Dominion Coal. The minister answered as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I do not know all the implications of the question. I should look into it and I may answer tomorrow.

Here are the important words in the minister's answer:

In principle I say that the corporation should keep its word and live up to its agreements.

I would, therefore, ask the government and those people who are well aware of the situation in Cape Breton to reconsider this plan for compulsory retirement at the age of 60 and allow men from 60 to 65 to continue to work if they wish to do so. Otherwise, the government is about to participate in an unheard-of form of discrimination. Hon. gentlemen opposite are supposed to be struggling to do all they can for older workers, yet they are about to launch a program directly against people who wish to continue to work in some categories where they are experiencing their peak earning years. I would respectfully ask the Parliamentary Secretary to report to the minister and ask him to assure the older workers in Cape Breton that his statement of January 14 will be acted upon and that Devco will honour the agreements in effect at the time of the take-over from Dominion Coal.