

Copper Market and Price

mines east of the Rockies will now be required to make an appropriate contribution to this supply.

[English]

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the House has been interested to hear the minister's statement. It appears he has been moving in the right direction and I commend him for it.

Now that he has done this, perhaps he can take a little time to aid his colleague in charge of the Wheat Board to dispose of our vast quantities of wheat, because our wheat disposal program today is worse than it has been for 14 years—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hees:—recalling the deplorable situation which the previous Liberal government allowed to occur.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member's comments should be limited to the statement made by the minister.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, on January 1, 1969 the price of copper was 45 cents a pound. Before this last increase, about which there has been negotiation between the government and the copper producers, there had already been three increases concerning which the government made no comment. The result is that even taking into account the agreement on the part of the copper producers to limit their present price to 59 cents a pound, increases in the price of copper during the last 13 months amount to more than 30 per cent. This does not take into account the fact, which the minister has admitted, that the price of 59 cents a pound will not cover all the needs of Canadian users of copper; they will have to pay a good deal more for a substantial percentage of the copper they require.

This increase in price comes at a time when the profits of the copper producers—Noranda, Inco, Falconbridge, Texas Gulf—are higher than they ever were in the past. Their admitted profits, which are less than their actual profits, have been increasing by more than 10 per cent a year. The acquiescence on the part of the government makes it clear that price increases are not caused by wage increases. Price increases amounting to more than 30 per cent in one year amount to substantially more than any wage increases won by workers in the copper industry in that year. It is

[Mr. Pepin.]

also clear that the government's appeal to industry to hold any price increases which they may implement to a figure less than the actual increase in costs has been a failure.

There is no evidence that the copper producers demonstrated to the Prices and Incomes Commission or to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, who made this statement today, that this increase to which the hon. gentleman is agreeing has been made necessary by increased costs or falling profits. It is obvious the increase is due to the fact that the world price of copper has substantially increased because of the shortage of copper. The copper companies are saying they are entitled to this increase because they could get more in the United States. I suggest to the minister and to the government that the workers in this industry or in any other industry would be less than human if they did not take the same attitude of being entitled to ask, fight for and get whatever the traffic will bear, just as the copper companies have done, and to ignore the pious appeals made by the Prime Minister and the hon. gentleman that they should show some restraint in the future.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) who was kind enough to make his statement available to us in both official languages, and I will try to keep my comments as brief as his statement.

The minister announced that a decision has been taken with a view to keeping prices at a level below that of the American and the London markets. At first sight, this decision would give to understand that if would-be London customers could buy copper on the Canadian market at 21 cents less than on their domestic market or at 10 cents less than in the United States we would increase the number of our customers. But the minister and the government saw fit to set the Canadian production at the level of 23,500 tons a month.

Besides, the minister says that producers in eastern Canada should try not to exceed that production level. I think that is a normal attitude, because even if they could produce much more and new mines could be developed to give work to thousands of unemployed, the government is slow in announcing whether the subsidies to gold mines development will be renewed this year. The