

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

faced with idle times this winter and who have recently been laid off because of the single shift policy in the No. 18 colliery in my area. I think a good deal could be done in this direction, and the greater the number of government departments acting in co-operation to provide alternative employment possibilities, the better the chances will be of finding something concrete which will provide that employment. I have in mind such programs as were introduced by the previous government, in particular the fortress Louisburg project. This was one of the recommendations of the Rand commission. I may say I never did agree with much of what was contained in that report, though I have possibly been proven wrong in connection with the development at Louisburg. This development will mean a great deal to our area in the future. It has been helpful in providing employment, and I hope the program will be accelerated so as possibly to help out some of those men recently displaced at the No. 18 colliery.

I trust the minister, in co-operation with his colleagues in other departments, will do everything he can to assist in the event of light industries coming in to build around the heavy water industry. I have in mind in particular a metal fabrication industry which is showing some interest in locating on Cape Breton. There are rumours it may establish a machine shop at the vacated naval base, and if that is the case I would ask the minister to give a helping hand if it is possible to establish that industry in the area. As I said, the Rand commission report never excited me and I did not agree with very much of what it contained. As for the statements which have been forthcoming from Mr. Whittaker and from the hon. member for Coast-Capilano, the people of Cape Breton and the mining areas of Nova Scotia generally find them most disturbing, particularly since the hon. member for Coast-Capilano is the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, and they want an assurance that such statements carry no weight whatsoever.

In addition to those statements, one other piece of information has come to my attention. It has to do with the recommendations of the Rand commission report. I questioned the minister about this shortly after he had returned from his trip to Cape Breton and I referred to the intention of some people, people in a position to act if the government accepted the policy, to implement the recommendation of the Rand commission referring to the reduction of production to three mil-

[Mr. Fisher.]

lion tons a year. Such a reduction if it were put into effect would mean, in my estimation, together with the loss of the second shift at one colliery, possibly the elimination of another colliery altogether, and it would be a blow which the area certainly could not take. I ask the minister to give us an assurance that such a recommendation would get no consideration whatsoever and that the government would turn a deaf ear to any such proposal, as it would to the suggestion concerning the subvention. I believe the department could contribute a great deal, in co-operation with other departments, to promoting alternative employment and it is my hope that any industry wishing to develop in the mining areas, whether associated directly with the heavy water plant now under way or not, will be assisted in every way possible by the hon. gentleman and his officials.

Mr. Benidickson: Since the hon. member for Cape Breton South and the hon. member for Pictou have both referred to a statement made by a member of the dominion coal board perhaps I should take this opportunity to reply to the point which has been raised. I will refer to the other matters later, in a general way.

May I say that on Wednesday I was in Alberta where I met the members of the coal board. At that time I had not seen the statement referred to; the board had met a week earlier at Lake Louise. But I did see Mr. Whittaker, and since returning to Ottawa I have seen the Canadian Press report which, I imagine, is the basis for the remarks of the hon. member for Cape Breton South. I have also noted the question which was raised on Tuesday by the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria, in reply to which the Prime Minister said that if Mr. Whittaker's remarks had been accurately quoted they were not an indication of government policy.

I completely agree. I do not think the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria was properly reporting what Mr. Whittaker said. It was obvious to me, at least, from Mr. Whittaker's remarks, that he was referring only to the western sales of coal under subvention, which hon. members know are all export items bearing no relation whatever to maritime producers. He was referring to 800,000 tons on which assistance is given by subvention, in the light of the far more substantial subventions applied to the production of eastern coal. Mr. Whittaker simply said that since the purchasers of this 800,000 tons of western coal were in Japan, the subvention