

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

ning. Probably this is being done, but more emphasis should be given to planning a new program of real expansion, a program that is needed more now than ever before in the history of our country.

As the minister said, the mines branch of his department is the one best known by the public at large, and the minister himself is generally referred to as the minister of mines. It is gratifying to note that mineral production in this country has continued to expand—that it has expanded probably at a rhythm in excess of that enjoyed by most other mineral producing countries since the end of the second world war. Production has now reached a value of around \$3 billion. This is a staggering amount of money and, indeed, it represents a significant fraction of our total gross national product. It is obvious therefore that the efforts of the minister and his department should be directed toward sustaining and further increasing the output of this industry.

Although its output is increasing, the mining industry is faced with serious problems. One of these concerns the efficient recovery of minerals from low grade deposits. Most of our great producing mines have been in existence for many years. Some of the largest have been forced to close down within recent years because of the lack of reserves. Instead of mining the high grade stuff, the industry now must spend greater sums of money and exert more ingenious efforts in order to extract sufficient pay dirt to make its activities profitable. This has created a host of problems which must be faced by the industry, and this is where the mines branch has a definite duty to perform by showing the greatest possible degree of imagination in assisting an industry which is of paramount importance to our prosperity.

There is also the problem presented by the increased competition which faces the mining industry in Canada. Though the state of our industry continues to be good, competition at the international level is constantly increasing. The impact of trading conditions is made clear when one remembers that three fifths of the total output of our mines is exported to other countries. It is therefore most necessary that the department, and not only the department but the government as a whole, should make every effort to extend to our mining industry all the assistance possible. I know the pegging of the dollar at 92½ cents two years ago has helped to keep our mining industry alive. I do not think many of our producers would be in business today had it not been for the fixing

[Mr. Martineau.]

of the dollar at 92½ cents. There was a dire need for such action in many fields, but nowhere more than in the mining field. Fortunately, this step was taken by the previous administration and I was reassured last week when the Acting Minister of Finance, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, told the house that the present exchange rate of the dollar was satisfactory and the government had no intention of changing it. I think this was reassuring news to our export industry, particularly to the mining industry.

But there are other ways in which the government and, in particular, the bureau of mines, could help the mining industry. One suggestion is that teams of experts be sent to the producers to work right in with the miners, the superintendents and the mining captains to help them become more efficient. I was talking not long ago with a mining engineer of very extensive experience in industrial and mining engineering. I was astounded to hear him say that probably not more than 10 per cent of our mines were operating in a really efficient manner. I do not think he meant they were necessarily inefficient. He probably meant that with increased aid they could operate much more efficiently. Such assistance would produce immeasurable benefit, in my opinion, for the industry itself, for the workers and for the mining communities in general. These teams should be organized by the bureau of mines, trained, and sent right out to the centres of production. Let them go where gold and other metals are produced. Let them pay attention to work studies. Let them show the producers how to make the utmost use of human and material resources as well as greater use of the science known as industrial engineering.

Some industries, including some mines, have made intensive use of the new techniques and as a result have achieved savings which in the case of the larger firms have been most substantial. One firm, Stelco, for example, made savings amounting to as much as \$5 million in one year. This was the result of greater supervision of production processes. My point is that it is one of the prime duties of the mines branch to encourage the producers to make use of modern methods, and that the branch should go in and train producers in the use of these methods. This would probably be an innovation, though I know there has been some contact between the mines bureau and the producers in the past, especially in the gold mining industry. However, I feel there is room for improvement and that these contacts could be intensified.