

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

Mr. MacInnis: Would the hon. member permit a question? Would he mind repeating the figures on reduction in production?

Mr. Robichaud: Yes, I said that in the last two years, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the reduction has been approximately 500,000 tons per year. These figures are confirmed on page 39 of the annual report, a copy of which the hon. member probably does not have in his hands, although he should have it because he is keenly interested in the coal problem and the latest information should be made available to him.

Mr. MacInnis: I asked for the figures on production for the years before that.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Robichaud: One at a time.

Mr. Woolliams: No, I want to ask a question. Is it not a fact that between 15 million and 20 million tons of coal about which the hon. member is talking came in from the United States during the time the Liberals were in power in this country?

Mr. Pickersgill: What has that got to do with production?

Mr. Robichaud: The figures I have quoted have nothing to do with imports into Canada. I have quoted the production figures.

On page 6 of this report, it is stated:

In the year under review, 1959-60, total coal consumption in Canada suffered a further decline to 24,414,000 tons—the lowest consumption figure since 1933.

Further on, it says:

It is perhaps noteworthy that the only category of coal consumption which did not show a decline during 1959-60 was the requirements of coking plants. In this case, there was a million ton increase in consumption, attributable to the high level of activity in Canadian steel plants during the year. There will almost certainly continue to be a need, probably a growing need, for metallurgical coal.

This report states there will be a growing need for metallurgical coal. The minister should give this committee further details on the expectations for an increased market for this particular coal. On what is this statement based? What is the reason for arriving at such a conclusion? The minister should inform this committee what proportion of the increase, if there was a million ton increase in the consumption of this coal in 1959-60, was met by coal produced in the maritime provinces, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. We should also like to know from the minister, if he has this information, what quantity of Nova Scotia coal was sold in Ontario during the year ending March 31, 1961.

I noted that the report to which I have referred states that the amount sold in Ontario in 1960 was about the limit that could be reached. If I recall correctly, the minister referred to this fact in his statement. The minister has said, in this house and outside, on numerous occasions that his main hope for an increase in the sale of coal remained in the province of Ontario. I think the minister should take advantage of this opportunity to clarify this statement.

Further on in this report, on page 11, it is stated:

In the maritime provinces there was also a sharp increase in 1959 in residual oil consumption and imports.

The minister and the dominion coal board should have information as to the quantity of residual oil which was imported into the maritime provinces in 1959. We should like to know also if the minister has the same figures for 1960.

No doubt the minister is aware of a request that was presented to the government by the United Mine Workers of America asking for a one cent per gallon increase in the tariff on imports of oil. The amount so collected could be used to protect the coal industry. We would appreciate knowing from the minister what the position of the government is with regard to this request.

Now, Mr. Chairman, it was on August 20, 1959, that the Prime Minister made an announcement appointing a royal commission to study the coal problem. In referring to the appointment of this commission, here is what the 1959-60 report of the dominion coal board has to say:

The announcement said "the government feels the coal problem is a special one and so urgent as to require a special inquiry rather than consideration to be given as part of the general problem relating to sources of energy which is the field of investigation of the Borden commission on energy". After reviewing the additional subvention assistance provided both for maritime coal and the expansion of export shipments of western coal, the statement expressed the view that subsidies can do no more than temporarily meet the problem and indicated that recommendations to assure a long term solution would be expected of the new royal commission. Detailed terms of reference and the personnel of the royal commission would be announced at a later date.

That announcement was made on October 6 of the same year. It is very clear that the subventions have only been introduced to meet temporarily the problems indicated in the recommendations. The minister has admitted this fact in his statement this evening and he said that following the receipt of the report of the interdepartmental committee he will soon make long term recommendations with regard to a long term policy. I hope that the recommendations to be made by the minister in the name of the government will not