

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

averaged 216 days of work each. In the United States in that year employed coal miners averaged 185 days.

I feel, Mr. Chairman, that hon. members would not wish me to close this statement without paying a sincere and heartfelt tribute to Mr. Wilbur Uren who served this country so well as chairman of the dominion coal board since its establishment in 1947 until his retirement on April 1 of the present year. It is probably a measure of the value of his services, especially in these past few years of crisis in the coal industry, that some sort of record was established in the number of extensions he received beyond the normal retirement age of 65. The first extensions were authorized by the previous government and the remainder by the present government. I know I can tender to him the thanks of all of us for his fine service and our best wishes in his well earned retirement.

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank the minister for the statement he has just made to the committee in the presentation of the first item having to do with the dominion coal board. I noticed from his statement that the minister has realized the seriousness of the coal situation and he has admitted that the actions taken by the government so far by way of subventions are not sufficient to take care of the coal problems of the day. The minister has also referred to the royal commission on coal under Mr. Justice Rand which presented its report some time last fall. He has stated that the interdepartmental committee which was appointed by the government last fall to make a study and report on the recommendations of the Rand commission has now concluded its work and the report is now in the minister's hands. I feel that it is an injustice to members of the house, whether on the government side or in the opposition, to have to discuss the estimates of the dominion coal board when a report which would be very important in such discussions is being held up until the estimates are passed.

On February 14 I asked the minister the following question, as found on page 2016 of *Hansard*:

Can the minister advise the house whether the interdepartmental committee set up to advise the government on the Rand report has completed its study. If so, is the minister in a position to report to the house on the recommendations made by the said committee?

In the latter part of his reply the minister said that the committee was progressing with its study and he expected that the recommendations to the cabinet would be made within a few weeks. That is almost four months ago, and it is only tonight that we have learned from the minister that the report

[Mr. Comtois.]

has been completed and has been handed to the cabinet. We are called upon to discuss the estimates of the dominion coal board for the fiscal year 1961-62 and the latest information available to most hon. members is the annual report of the dominion coal board for the year 1958-59. We are not in a position to compare the estimates for the coming fiscal year with the report of the coal board for the previous year.

I notice that in his statement the minister used figures and made references to the dominion coal board annual report for the year 1959-60. I happen to have in my hands a copy of this report which was handed to me this morning. I say again that it is not fair to members of this committee that they have to discuss the estimates of the department at a time when they have to go back three years to get some information on the division of the department that is under discussion. The minister should be in a position to give us further details with regard to the information which is contained in the annual report of the dominion coal board for the year 1959-60 and which I repeat is not in the hands of most of the members of this committee.

On page 4 of this report, I find the following statement:

Over the past decade, the decline of Canadian coal production has been nearly 50 per cent, and the decline of coal mine employment slightly more than 50 per cent, the difference representing a small increase in ability to produce more coal per man shift.

I should like the minister to inform this committee if this statement is also true with regard to the production of coal in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

The minister has quoted certain figures which he has taken from page 5 of this report and which are based on the calendar year instead of the fiscal year. I should like to get from the minister the number of employees in each year, and also the average days worked per year, in the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick coal mines from 1950 to 1960. The minister must have this information for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick because he has quoted from this report similar information relating to Canadian production.

There is a reference on page 4 of this report, as I have said, to the fact that the decline in Canadian coal production has been nearly 50 per cent. The facts are that from the year 1949 to 1957 the decrease in production in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick coal mines was less than 500,000 tons, approximately 55,000 tons per year. In the last two years, the decrease in production in the same area, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, has been over 500,000 tons per year.