

The Address—Mr. Fleming

Mines and Resources (Mr. Gibson). The gist of the statement he made is that, having regard to the fact that, in consequence of devaluation gold has increased by ten per cent or \$3.50 per ounce, a corresponding reduction is to be made in the subsidy paid to producing gold mines under the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act, commencing January 1. I submit that this statement indicates that no adequate account has been taken by the government of the fact that the restoration of the ten per cent discount on the Canadian dollar has simply had the effect of restoring the price of gold which Canadian gold producers received up until the time of the devaluation in June, 1946. In that intervening period the costs of gold producers in Canada have increased at least thirty per cent. They are now given a restoration of the price that was reduced by ten per cent at that time, and now the government says: You must accept a corresponding reduction in the benefits that were promised to you under this three-year act.

As every hon. member of this house knows, the act gave assistance to the producing mines but it did not give assistance to development work carried on apart from the big gold producers. I am waiting for some members representing constituencies in northern Ontario and supporting the government to rise in this house and make some plea for assistance to the gold mining industry. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, it is not just a question of assisting the stockbrokers in Toronto. I am not making any plea for the Toronto Stock Exchange. I am making a plea for the recognition of the difficulties of an industry which means a great deal to the economy of this country and which contributed substantially to pulling this country through the depression of the thirties.

A great and well-informed Canadian recently had something to say about the failure of members of parliament to recognize what the gold mining industry has contributed to Canada. I refer to Dr. Charles Camsell, former deputy minister of mines and resources. In a prepared address that was delivered at Oxford on July 14 last, he is quoted as saying this to the fourth Empire Mining and Metallurgical Congress:

Many of Canada's legislators do not appreciate to what extent gold has been responsible for the development of Canada . . . "The influence of gold on our Canadian economy has been vastly greater than mere production statistics would indicate." A casual trip through the belt extending through northern Ontario and Quebec revealed the influence of gold deposits in developing the country and making it possible for permanent industry or agriculture to "live and thrive." Canada today needed strong mining industry more than ever before, particularly for strategic reasons.

Then going on to speak of the northwest territories, Dr. Camsell said:

I know of nothing that will take any considerable body of population into that country except the lure of gold or some other mineral such as uranium.

When he spoke in northern Ontario in the election campaign, the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), gave certain assurances to the gold mining industry as to the extension of the benefits of the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act. I take it that these assurances are to be given legislative effect, notwithstanding what was said yesterday by the Minister of Mines and Resources (Mr. Gibson). It may be that these assurances were what he was referring to in the concluding paragraph of his statement, although, sir, it is not altogether clear.

I should like to turn briefly to the subject of housing to make preliminary and passing comment upon the statement made in the house yesterday by the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply (Mr. Winters). It is quite obvious, Mr. Speaker, that we must wait for the legislation which he indicated in his statement, before being able to make a completely considered statement upon the policy that the government announced. The statement, while timely, was perhaps inevitably vague, and I do not propose to make detailed comment upon it until I see the legislation.

There are one or two features of it which the house will receive with pleasure. The first is that, at last, the government is recognizing we have not in this country been keeping pace with the housing problem. The minister said as much in his statement yesterday. Statements have been made by responsible officials before this. Last April we had a statement by the assistant general manager, Major-General Young, of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, when he said that Canada's housing situation is getting worse instead of better. At last, Mr. Speaker, we can apparently expect an end to these airy statements which we used to hear so often from the government about the improvement in housing conditions, and the worst being over, and our having passed the hump—statements that bore no relationship to reality. At last we have an admission of the fact that the problem has been growing bigger. The fact that at last we have that admission is encouraging.

The second thing I should like to say about the statement is this. The dominion government has accepted, in terms clearer than we have heard hitherto, at least a measure of responsibility in connection with housing. We have heard so many denials of responsibility, so many statements to the effect that it was the responsibility of the provinces, that