

Coal Production Assistance Act

their mine at Sydney Mines, which is known as Princess colliery. Many changes were made in their coal handling facilities on the surface and underground, among which was the erection of a modern coal washing and screening plant. As a result of this modernization, both below and above the surface, this mine was in a position to meet competition, as well as any mine could be, when traditional markets for coal began to be lost to oil, hydro power and natural gas.

It also had a further effect. In 1961 Florence colliery was closed and over 500 men found themselves without employment. However, since there was a market for coal from Princess colliery the work force at that mine was greatly increased. The result was that a large number of men from the Florence mine were employed immediately, and within a comparatively short period all the men put out of work by the closing of Florence were placed in Princess, which is only about three miles from their homes.

I might also add that the Bras d'Or Coal Company in my constituency, has also obtained loans under this act to enable it to develop and improve its coal mining operations. It would appear therefore that the coal mining industry in Nova Scotia has to some extent become stabilized. In 1961 the total production was just over 4,300,000 tons and the indications are that it will be about the same this year, and it should be remembered that a third mine was closed in August of this year.

So far as employment is concerned the closing of this last mine presented the most difficult problem of all. The employees displaced could not be absorbed into the working force of the other collieries, and the placing of what are known as permanent employees from this mine into other mines has caused some difficulty. In order to assist in the problem, the government of the province of Nova Scotia has instituted a pension plan for coal miners between 60 and 65 years of age in the New Waterford area, whereby those who have reached their sixtieth birthday can retire. Their places in the mines are then taken by men made idle by the closure of this last mine. I understand that close to 300 have taken advantage of this plan which is of considerable help in solving the problem, and the federal government has co-operated with the province in the financing of the plan.

I urge that the government, and I trust the minister is listening, through the dominion coal board and under the provisions of this bill would extend to the Dominion Coal Company every assistance and co-operation in the event that the company is desirous of erecting a wash plant, as it had planned a few years

[Mr. Muir.]

ago. This would provide the means whereby the coal could be made much more marketable.

Summed up in brief, if a better quality of coal is provided at the mine this would mean more sales, and more sales will naturally mean more employment for our coal miners.

The amendments contained in the bill will not, as far as I know, affect any companies in Nova Scotia so far as the minimum rate of repayment is concerned, but the bill can be, and will be, of assistance in so far as it deals with the question of repayment where a second loan is obtained before the first one is wholly repaid.

In conclusion let me say that the leaders of the united mine workers of district 26, particularly President William Marsh, Mr. Stephen Dolhanty, Mr. Michael Higgins and Mr. John Delaney, and also the provincial and federal governments and the Dominion Coal Company are to be highly commended for all their efforts towards alleviating a situation that could otherwise have been much more serious. Before I take my seat I should like to quote from a recent statement made by President Marsh, which appeared in the October 29 issue of the Cape Breton Post. This was a report of an address he made to the members of the Princess local of the United Mine Workers of America and I have no doubt Mr. Marsh had in mind the Coal Production Assistance Act and other measures when he spoke as he did. The report reads as follows:

As part of the brighter picture presented by President Marsh, a statement was also made by him to the effect that, as far as Dosco is concerned, stability has been established in the Sydney Mines—Florence area. In one year following the closure of Florence colliery all the physically fit permanent and temporary employees of that mine have been placed in Princess, along with the temporary workers of the latter who were laid off at the time of the Florence closure.

Referring to No. 16 closure in New Waterford, the union chief stated that the provincial government's pension plan is having a tremendous effect in cushioning harmful results that were expected to follow it. To date, he said, 290 applications have been made by miners in the category acceptable, making room for the same number of miners that would have been bumped . . .

He said that the federal government's 30 cent subsidy in the eastern Canadian non-subvention area has had a very favourable effect and that it looks promising for the marketing of the coal produced.

I would hope that the minister would see fit, before this session is over, to bring in other measures that will definitely assist the coal industry.

Mr. H. J. Robichaud (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, in order to follow the trend which is obvious in the house tonight, my remarks will be very brief. First I wish to express the