

Gold Mining

(Mr. Croll) said the other day, there is a housing shortage in this country, a housing crisis. I do urge that the government show the same concern for the Canadian people who need housing when that question comes before the house. We support this bill because there is a need. There is a greater need for houses in Canada, and we do hope that the government will recognize the principle of subsidies when it comes to deal with that urgent and important question.

Mr. E. T. Applewhaite (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, on my own behalf and on behalf of a large section of the area which I represent, I welcome the introduction of this resolution and the proposed extension of the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act. We welcome it not only for its own terms, but because we see in it the continued expression of the interest of the government of Canada in the problems of the mining industry, and particularly those of the gold mining industry.

A great deal has been said this afternoon which I do not intend to go over but which I think, particularly as it has originated on all sides of the house, indicates that the gold mining industry is a matter of major importance to the Dominion of Canada. The point that I wish to make to the minister and to the government this afternoon is that there is still truth in the old proverb that great oaks from little acorns grow, and great gold mines are developed always from little prospects.

Something has been said this afternoon about the danger of a major decline in the gold production of Canada. And, never mind what not too brilliant ideas the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Gibson) may have expressed on this subject some time ago, the production of gold in Canada is, under our present system, a matter of some concern.

Under the terms of the act which is being extended, Mr. Speaker, it will not be possible for the minister to extend assistance to properties whose production runs below 50 ounces a year. The small producer of gold is found more often in placer mining than in lode mining, but at the same time there are also properties which make from small production of gold low profits during their initial period, particularly if they are fortunate enough to find a little vein on the property which lends itself to high-grade ore. I realize that there might be some grave difficulties in administering the act if there were not to be a limit on how small the property must be that might be assisted.

I am not going to go into the question of whether or not 50 ounces is a proper level, but I am going to use this opportunity to urge the minister and the government in some way, either under this act, or in other ways, to be

of assistance to the prospector who, after all, is the backbone of the mining industry and always will be. Without him, there would never be any Hollinger, any Dome, any McIntyre, any Premier, any Bralorne, any major mining producer of any description.

Mines—this is of course a platitude—are in their very nature a wasting asset. To maintain the mining industry you have to keep on bringing in new properties. This can only be done through the prospectors, and so, both in the interest of the country itself and in fairness to the little man, the little prospector, the little operator, I would ask the minister and the government to give some thought to these suggestions.

Mr. J. A. Simmons (Yukon-Mackenzie River): I should like to say just a few words in support of the resolution before us. As all hon. gentlemen are aware, the fixed price of gold and the mining costs of operations have placed the industry in a precarious position. The present fixed price is the big problem, and it is to be hoped that the government can set in motion some definite action which will result in a price commensurate with the cost of producing it, so that the operators can stabilize their position and look forward with some degree of confidence in planning future operations which are so necessary to the future of gold mining areas throughout the constituency I have the honour to represent.

It would be a great contribution to the national economy of Canada if something could be done to restore the gold mining industry to its former status and level. But the way it now stands the subject is bound up with international and economic intricacies. One concern, I believe, is that the Canadian government is not in a position to take independent action as a member of the international monetary fund.

We welcome the extension of the type of assistance given under the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act, but this can be considered only as a temporary expedient. Unless some permanent solution can be found, I am afraid the industry can only look forward to a steady decline. The operators throughout my constituency feel great concern and doubt the adequacy of the proposed measure to meet the needs of the industry.

Gold has been pegged at \$35 an ounce in United States funds since 1934, and I believe it is the only commodity produced in Canada which still sells for the 1934 price. We would like to see it increased in price to the same extent as other commodities have increased since 1934.

The fixed price, coupled with rising costs, constitutes a threat to many producing gold