

Manpower and Immigration Council

endeavouring to take advantage of this program to retrain and better their position in this country, were told that they, as miners, were excluded from this program of retraining and upgrading.

We ought to consider, for a moment, why miners would want to take advantage of a program such as this. In that connection I should like to give a couple of illustrations. One of them has to do with a man who came to my office last week. He is an immigrant who arrived in this country in 1951 and worked for some 17 years in the Timmins gold mines. At the age of 48, because of low wages prevailing in the gold mines, he wanted to make a change and thought that he should make it before his age prevented him from so doing. He went to British Columbia and obtained a job with the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada Limited. Some weeks after that he received a registered letter from the medical referee for silicosis for the health authorities of British Columbia, and owing to his condition was barred from working in the British Columbia mines. He returned to Ontario, was taken on by Dome Mines Limited, passed his X-ray to go underground and at the present time is working underground. Needless to say, the man, his wife and family were greatly perturbed. After working in mining for 17 years he finds that he cannot pass the basic minimum medical requirement of another province. Nevertheless, for some strange reason, in the province of Ontario he is considered fit to work underground.

I wish to give another example of a man who for some 11 years tried to establish a silicosis pension. He was told that, according to the act in force in Ontario, he did not have silicosis. After that he was killed in a motor car accident and the insurance companies became involved. His widow's legal representative received a letter from the lawyers representing the other party. It was to the effect that because the man had suffered from advanced silicosis, the settlement should be much smaller than otherwise it would have been as his earning capacity had been greatly reduced.

I have cited these two illustrations to show why miners should be the first to come under the umbrella of this measure. They should have the opportunity to upgrade themselves, to retrain themselves, before it is too late and their health suffers.

As I said, on several occasions this summer I heard of miners who had tried to take

[Mr. Martin (Timmins).]

advantage of this program, only to be told that they were barred from it. I took up this question with local officials of a manpower office, and one of them said that mining is a very necessary industry for this country. There is a great shortage of miners and therefore they cannot be retrained for other jobs.

I cannot think of anything more unfair. Should a man, because he is silly enough in this day and age to become a skilled miner, be given a life sentence so far as this program is concerned? The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, in the speeches he has made over the last year or two, appears to have recognized the situation in the mines. When the mine operators went to him, with a great hue and cry, asking that there should be brought into this country unskilled, untrained and uneducated men to fill the jobs in the mines, he told them that if they paid better wages and established proper working conditions there would be no shortage of miners. I could not agree more with the minister's estimate.

What have we under this program, Mr. Chairman? In effect, we have collusion—it is not intended, I know—between the mine operators and this department of government. The government is saying, by its attitude: "Okay, continue to pay low wages; continue to keep these dismal working conditions; we will exclude the miners from retraining programs so that they can better themselves." That, in effect, is what is happening. It is high time that this question was looked into and this situation corrected.

There is another program under the minister's jurisdiction that I wish to mention. I have brought this question to the minister's attention. It has to do with the mobility program.

• (8:10 p.m.)

Not long ago a mine in the Timmins area closed down. One of the men who was thrown out of work took advantage of this program and was moved from Timmins to Pickle Crow with the assistance of the department which paid, on his behalf, the sum of \$370 to move his furniture. He worked in Pickle Crow for less than a year before the mine there closed down, when he was faced with the same situation as before. Again, this program took effect and he was moved to the Tri-Bag mine at Bachawana Bay. The distance between Timmins and Pickle Crow is some 184 miles further than the distance between Pickle Crow and Bachawana Bay,