

*Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act*

Alternative sources of employment in the gold mining communities are limited. Additional employment opportunities may be developed in the long term through the discovery of new, viable mineral deposits and through a broad industrial promotion program.

Assistance is provided by my department to mineral development programs through the dissemination of geoscientific information. The recently enacted Regional Development Incentives Act, enhanced by a broad industrial promotion program, might produce additional employment opportunities. The program would involve investigation of the industrial opportunities for the main gold-belt region and the co-ordination of current federal and provincial programs. However, even if such programs are successful in establishing new enterprises, they should not be expected to provide employment opportunities for the majority of the displaced gold miners, although they might help maintain the gold mining communities at lower levels of economic activity in the long term.

It is my view that a full share of the responsibility for aiding in the adjustment of the gold mining communities should be accepted by the provinces concerned, by the gold mine operators and the labour unions and by the municipalities themselves. The government has decided, therefore, to seek authority from Parliament to extend the application of the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act for a period of 2½ years to June 30, 1973, without change in the method of computing the amount of assistance payable to a gold mine operator.

The date of June 30 has been selected in preference to December 31 so that when the act is finally terminated it will occur at the end of the school year and during the summer season. The government is prepared to consider a further extension of the act beyond June 30, 1973, provided satisfactory arrangements can be made to have the other interested parties participate fully in aiding the gold mining communities to adjust to the changing circumstances. The government is examining the possibilities of developing such arrangements.

On August 7, I announced the intention of the government to extend the act in order to end the uncertainty of the gold mining communities with respect to their immediate economic prospects. The Bill which is before the House not only provides for the extension of the act to June 30, 1973, but also introduces certain requirements to be observed by gold mine operators. Clause 2 of the bill prohibits the payment of assistance to lode gold mines which were not in production at the time of my announcement on August 7, 1970. It would not appear to be in the public interest to encourage the development of new or dormant gold mines which are dependent upon assistance payments from the outset.

Clause 3 of the bill provides, as a condition of receiving assistance after December 31, 1970, that operators of lode gold mines will be required to conduct the hiring of all employees through the facilities administered by the Department of Manpower and Immigration, to give written notice of the closure of a gold mine at least four months before the mine ceases production, and to retain,

immediately after notice of closure is given, the services of the Department of Manpower and Immigration to assist in finding employment for the displaced employees. The purpose of these requirements is to provide gold mine employees displaced by mine closures with as much assistance as possible in their readjustment. The provisions of clauses 2 and 3 do not apply to placer gold mines, which are few in number and operate on a seasonal basis. Only ten placer gold mines, employing less than 50 persons, applied for assistance under the act for the year 1969.

• (9:20 p.m.)

It is my belief that the provisions of this bill offer a major contribution to the alleviation of the special economic and social problems confronting the gold mining communities, and I hope that our consultations with the provinces, municipalities, gold mine operators and labour unions will result in new avenues to attack the problems of the gold mining communities.

**Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Mr. Speaker, once again Parliament is being asked to extend the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act. There has been an "emergency" in this regard for 24 years, just like the temporary buildings in Ottawa many of which were built at about the same time or even before the act was proclaimed. These emergency pieces of legislation are always with us. The minister has not given very much hope this evening that the situation of the gold mining communities will improve. In fact, the whole tenor of his remarks was that we will see the gold mining industry disappear very shortly.

This matter was also dealt with on September 29, 1967. At that time another minister of the department introduced the act. I made a lengthy address at that time, which I do not intend to repeat tonight; but I believe the remarks I made then are just as applicable now. Apparently there is very little hope of saving the gold mining communities on a permanent basis. The whole purpose of this act is to let the communities and the people down slowly and keep hoping that something will happen before the next occasion on which the act has to be renewed. The minister gently prepared us tonight for the next renewal. He stated this renewal will continue until June, 1973, at which time he will consider a further extension. This is a very unusual and unfortunate situation.

I intend to make only a few remarks on the bill. In many ways the situation in the gold mining communities is worse now than it was in 1967. The unpegging of the Canadian dollar this year has hurt the gold mining industry even more. The world price of gold—as we are all aware—is based upon the American dollar, at \$35 an ounce. It has been that way for a long time. As the Canadian dollar moves upward, the mines receive less for their production. The action of the government in permitting the dollar to be freed earlier this year has had many unexpected effects. One is that the gold mining situation and the price of gold is worse rather than better.

[Mr. Greene.]