

Business of the House

whether the responsibilities of the companies that are being assisted under this act are being properly discharged with regard, first, to the employees of the mines and, second, with regard to the consuming public.

So far as the employees are concerned, the precise fact is that this assistance helps the coal mines to keep their employees at work and to provide better working conditions for the miners. With regard to the consuming public, I would point out that the coal exported under assistance on movements of coal to Japan is not at all the type that is used in the domestic market for home furnaces and other uses. As a matter of fact, before the market in Japan was developed no market at all existed for this type of coal. It is a bituminous coking coal that forms in slacks and is not suitable for furnace consumption. Therefore the hon. member may rest assured that such assistance as is being provided does not affect the availability of other types of coal for the people of his constituency or his province.

However, as I told him personally before, if he has any particulars or complaints I am sure the coal board will make a full investigation and assure itself that no one is lacking in supplies of coal because, as most of the hon. members who participated in the debate outlined, the main problem affecting the coal industry today is markets. The policy of the government has been to keep the coal industry as active as possible by providing assistance and by developing markets.

The hon. member for Gloucester asked if I would make a policy declaration at this time stemming from the report of the Rand commission which investigated the coal industry a few years ago. I am not prepared to make an extensive statement in that regard this evening but I hope to be able to delve into more detail when the estimates of the dominion coal board are before the committee of supply. The present policy, of which the legislation before the house is a mere extension and enabling modification, is the one that was evolved in the late 1920's for the purpose of providing assistance on the movement of Canadian coal from the producing areas in eastern and western Canada to the large consuming areas in central Canada. Over the intervening years this assistance has amounted to some \$150 million and has provided for the movement of some 72 million tons of Canadian coal. In addition, as hon. members will realize, it has provided substantial employment to coal miners mostly in eastern Canada but more latterly in certain parts of western Canada and Alberta in particular.

In 1959 the Rand commission was appointed and its recommendations have been carefully reviewed, particularly in the light of various representations and objections received. The commissioner has set out in broad outline in the text of his report his findings and proposed remedies while the means for applying the proposals are set out in many specific recommendations. Under the present condition of change in the coal industry it has been our belief that the time is not yet ripe for the application of any radical, new and specific proposals or approach. However, at the same time, and I should like to emphasize this, the policy has been directed not only to maintaining the increased rate of assistance initiated in 1959 but to adopting many of the more general proposals set out in the body of the report.

Hon. members know that three mines have closed in Cape Breton; but as a result of action to spread out these closures and to provide alternative employment the impact on employees has been much less. Many of the men were taken on by the remaining mines and as a result employment has been kept at a rather stable level in the coal industry because of these measures. That is about all I have to say in closing the debate on second reading, and I wish to terminate by assuring hon. members that their remarks will be most carefully considered.

Motion agreed to and bill read the second time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, before I ask for the business of the house I am sure you would have no objection if I were to tell the house leader that we have co-operated today to the fullest extent with our friends on the other side by putting through the Freight Rates Reduction Act, the harbours bill, the aeronautics resolution and the resolution and bill having to do with a railway line in the province of New Brunswick. This is a very strong indication of our desire to assist the government in getting legislation through before the Christmas recess. However, our recompense for having done so has been a filibuster from the other side of the house on the Coal Production Assistance Act. Undoubtedly those of us who sit on this side could come to no other conclusion but that there was a filibuster by members on the other side who not only spoke on matters that had nothing to do with the bill but also spent a great deal of time discussing matters which would be much better discussed in the debate on the speech from the throne.