

Cape Breton Development Corporation Act the problems and needs of people puts him in a special category. The minister really cannot say that he does not understand. He has represented people working in industries where there is no pension plan. He has represented people who have not received a fair reward over long periods of time. The minister has seen workers who were left in less than advantageous circumstances and who either retired or were forced to retire.

So I repeat that the minister does have an obligation to meet. So long as he holds this portfolio we have the right to expect him to make more than just an average contribution to these people whom he represents and whose problems he understands. I suggest he will have to make this kind of contribution. Certainly he will have to indicate that he is making this contribution when he appears before the committee otherwise I would be prepared to vote against this legislation on third reading.

Mr. J. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to rise at this point in the debate since normally I like a little more time to prepare what I am going to say. I have just returned, literally within the hour, from Sydney which I visited last evening and today.

An hon. Member: An instant expert!

Mr. Broadbent: By no means do I claim to be an instant expert. I regret not being here to follow what has been said both by the minister and by members on this side of the House.

One thing I should like to convey to the ministers, in all seriousness, is the general feeling or atmosphere which I found in the Sydney area. It seems to me that, whatever the cause, there is overwhelming discontent in this part of Nova Scotia. I come from another industrial part of the country, one that is relatively well off, where there is relatively full employment and good industrial relationships, relatively speaking. Therefore, it was a rather unique experience for me to move into an area where there are unionized workers and firms that have established themselves for many years, and to find the kind of bitter frustration and antagonism which I observed in the Cape Breton area. I inform the minister that this is a genuine feeling that exists in the province, and the minister should be under no illusion that this sense of discontent and frustration is likely to pass quickly.

[Mr. Peters.]

Without going into the details of this bill, may I try to suggest to the minister the kind of problems about which the people of the area spoke to me. First of all, there was a feeling that things were being done to them, rather than by them or with them. There was the feeling that somehow outsiders were imposing their will on the people of the area, and there was little confidence that the outcome would be any better than what exists at the present time.

Second, and directly related to this, of course, was the feeling that the people themselves have had no active say in the operations of Devco. They have not been consulted about what should take the place of the mining industry there. They have not been asked to make any proposals, even with regard to the limited kind of tourist industry that has been newly established. They would like to play some role in this kind of decision-making.

I understand that the House was a little excited this afternoon by some rather blunt language from this side of the House, and some blunt language may be coming from the minister in reply. But I want to repeat to the minister that if the language this afternoon was blunt and forceful, it was probably a very accurate reflection of the feelings of the people in the Sydney and Glace Bay area in particular.

What I should like to suggest at this point is that the Committee on Regional Development move quickly into that area. I suggest this committee not wait a couple of months or until something serious develops in the form of violence; instead, I suggest that very soon the committee visit the Devco site itself. This committee, composed of members on both sides of the House, should make a genuine effort to understand the views of three sets of people. They should listen to the Devco officials. Then they should listen to the union leaders. Above all, they should talk to some of the people there who have this very genuine feeling, which I think has a great deal of foundation, that they are being unjustly dealt with.

It seems to me that this is the least we can do. The expense to the government would be minimal. The committee need not spend a week there; I suspect that two days would be quite sufficient to have frank talks with the people of the area. The committee could determine the basis for their grievances and see whether they are legitimately grounded.