

*Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys*

mining community of Elliot Lake is something to which he should give very close attention. I am sure he is doing this. How bad the situation is can be understood fairly easily by looking at the number of mortgages that are being turned in by the home owners of Elliot Lake. On January 24 of this year the Leader of the Opposition asked a question of the Minister of Public Works on this matter and the minister replied, as reported at page 1348 of *Hansard*:

The mortgages relating to 264 N.H.A. houses are currently in default and the approved lenders have advised C.M.H.C. of their intention to claim on the mortgage insurance fund. Two hundred and forty of the houses with mortgages in default are owned by the housing companies sponsored by the mines and have been acquired as a result of buy-back agreements between the housing companies and the mine employees who have left Elliot Lake. These houses are vacant. The remaining 24 mortgages in default relate to houses owned by individual home owners.

This interests me particularly because of the fact that many of my friends, men with whom I worked in the mines and who were neighbours and close acquaintances of mine, went into the Elliot Lake area and bought homes on the understanding that the enthusiasm of the provincial and federal governments and their agencies would mean there would be a continuous uranium operation for many years to come.

We need not go into the details of what happened, but it is surprising to me that an agreement which the Minister of Trade and Commerce called a firm commitment was made as far back as 1957, before the present government came into power. I am quite sure that if this is true, it is also true that the present president of Rio Tinto corporation was aware of that fact, though he may argue that he was not. I think this is not something which would escape his attention. I am referring, of course, to the new contracts which, if realized, will mean some 24 million pounds of uranium will be sold to Great Britain.

It seems to me that there is substance in the charges which were being made at the time the Rio Tinto corporation was trying to buy some of the smaller companies. They were making the case with Eldorado that they should be the only ones left in this field, because by enlarging their operations they would be able to operate at a much lower cost. They were saying this should be approved by Eldorado and they should have the sales contracts that were in existence. I think the provincial and federal governments were not fair. I say these governments were not fair because they knew about this and did not tell the miners and the women who came to Ottawa, and others, that the potential was going to increase after a certain period of

time with the opportunity of operating the mines because of these large sales. If I remember, the whole operation was considered in relation to sales to the United States and the fact that these contracts would be concluded in 1964, and it looked as though there would be no uranium industry at all after 1964. I would say that very few of the miners would agree with this had they known there was a possibility of a sale of 24 million pounds of uranium with the consequent employment which would be created.

No doubt other hon. members will have more to say about this. I just want to say that I think it is a disgrace that people are not told these things. When they are living in a community like Elliot Lake, where their very jobs depend upon the mines; when they have invested \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$4,000 in homes after having worked for many years to save this money, which they are going to lose, all governments and all politicians should refrain from playing politics with this kind of information. It should be made available so that each and every miner and householder in the community can make his decision whether to stay in Elliot Lake or go somewhere else.

Complete information on this matter seems to have been available not only to the Leader of the Opposition but to the government and the former minister of trade and commerce, now the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Some hon. members were not fair to those people who were faced with having to make a decision, and who had to make that decision not knowing all the facts. I believe this was originally the responsibility of the Leader of the Opposition, because he was in the cabinet at that time and later represented this area. He certainly should have had some knowledge of this situation prior to the 1958 election.

There is another problem with which I wish to deal. I should like to read a press clipping that appeared a few days ago, on May 29, in the *Ottawa Citizen*. It is something I have thought about, and I think about it in terms of other industrial occupational diseases. The article is headed:

Uranium mine cancer rate above normal

It is an Associated Press report from Washington, and reads:

The U.S. public health service said Saturday deaths from lung cancer are greater than normal among western uranium miners but an active program of controls has been set up by federal and state governments to curb the rate.

A spokesman said the rate is about ten deaths among 2,000 miners, compared to the normal rate of three in 2,000. Mostly, he added, the deaths are among men who have worked long in the uranium mines rather than from any short exposure to high radioactivity.