

*The Address—Mr. McGrath*

What canals and locks did for the economy of the central provinces, what the transcontinental railways did for the prairies, highways can do for Newfoundland. We are convinced that such a program is in the national interest. It would stimulate the economy of the island with attendant benefits to the rest of Canada. All this could be accomplished in a short time with a relatively modest outlay of public funds.

I am particularly happy to note, Mr. Speaker, that conducting the affairs of Canada today we have a government that has the vision and the foresight to implement in the main the recommendations of such an imaginative report, and I hope that before too long the federal government will take steps toward the implementation of the important and far reaching recommendations of the royal commission report, particularly those dealing with the problems of transportation in Newfoundland and their importance to the economy of the province.

I feel sure that the federal government will deal with this report in the spirit in which they have dealt with the problems of the Atlantic provinces over the last five years; because it is no secret, and I make no bones about the fact, that in the last five years this government has more than doubled the conditional and unconditional grants payable to the province of Newfoundland, and the tremendous importance of this to the economy of the province cannot be overestimated. Newfoundland, and indeed the Atlantic provinces of Canada can ill afford to go back to the fiscal policies of the previous Liberal administration, and I suggest they will not subject themselves to the folly of such a course.

I should like to deal now with a matter of grave importance to my own constituency and thousands of my constituents. I refer to the curtailment of operation by the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation at the Wabana mines at Bell island. If the house will bear with me I should like to refer to this matter at some length. Wabana mines have been producing iron ore of low grade since 1895, and this surely makes them among the oldest working mines in Canada. The mines were first worked by the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company. The present operators are their successors, the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation.

In terms of profit I suggest that the operation has been a very successful one. But, Mr. Speaker, the worth of a company or corporation cannot be measure in profit alone. Rather, the real worth must be measured by its relationship with its employees and what the company does during the course of its operations to improve the lot of its employees.

In this regard the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation certainly has, with respect to

its Wabana operations, what I would consider an unenviable reputation. Theirs has been in the main a history of exploitation. I realize that "exploitation" is a harsh word, but in my opinion it covers their behaviour most adequately. In my opinion also, and this opinion is shared by many others, the company has been guilty of gross neglect of its employees down through the years.

The population of Bell island today is approximately 14,000. It is very heavily overpopulated. The 14,000 people depend on the earning of less than 1,500. As a matter of fact, at the end of 1961 the company announced that there would be further reductions and we find now that they will only be employing 900. One would expect to find built up around a 60-year old mining operation a well established and well laid out town. That is not so on Bell island. On the contrary, everywhere you go you will find examples of gross neglect on the part of government and particularly on the part of the company. A 60-year old mining town cannot be classified as a mining camp after that period of time, but to all intents and purposes that is the way the company treats Bell island today.

For example, by virtue of the fact that the mine is located on an island, and by virtue of the nature of the operation—that is to say it, is a submarine operation—one would expect to find hospital and other facilities to cope with an emergency. This is not the case on Bell island. If an emergency were to occur underground or at the pithead, emergency measures would have to be taken to deal with the injured. In this regard, the government of the province certainly is not without fault. The provincial government and the company have done nothing, in my opinion, to remedy this most important need.

However, what I am concerned with at the moment, and what I should like to feel is the concern of the government at the moment, is the future of the Wabana mine operation. As the house is aware, Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation was taken over by a United Kingdom industrial complex known as A. V. Roe. I am sorry to say that the record of this company in Canada leaves a lot to be desired. Shortly after the take-over of Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation by A. V. Roe in 1959, the company closed down one of the three working slopes at Bell island, thereby displacing 600 men. I could speak of the way this lay-off was handled. It was handled without due regard to the human problems involved and, in my opinion, in a most inhumane way.

Following that lay-off, Bell island was declared by this government to be a labour