

Dominion Coal Board Dissolution Act

Rationalization is, of course, current jargon quite acceptable to economists when they gather to plan the future of the country, but I plead that when we use such terms here we bring to them a great deal of understanding and sensitivity. Unless we are sensitive to the needs of individuals who have been displaced or who are about to be made redundant, to use another contemporary jargon term, very real hardship may result. Speaking personally, I have no real objection to the plans of the government, though I do take objection when they are so inflexible as not to show a great deal of sensitivity for the problems of miners and their families.

• (12:30 p.m.)

In summary, then, I plead for more humanity. I plead for full disclosure of plans, because this will in large measure allay the fears of people who have given the best of their lives in what is a very tough, dirty and hazardous job. Thirdly, I enter a caveat in connection with some information I have received. I am informed that the Grand Lake Development Corporation has a very large measure of patronage attached to it, and that a good deal of money is being directed toward certain people. This is very hard for the representative of a New Brunswick constituency to understand. Nevertheless, to have people driving around in half-ton trucks making inspections endangers the credibility of people in the future of the Grand Lake Development Corporation.

Lastly, I should like to share with the parliamentary secretary in the warm tribute paid to those members who have served the public interest as members of the Dominion Coal Board for many years. In particular, I should like to single out Mr. Percival Streeter, who has the good sense to live in the constituency of Fundy-Royal.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I too should like to say a few words about Bill C-161, which not only seeks to dissolve the Dominion Coal Board but also to repeal three acts relating to coal operations. We find in clause 4 the repeal of the Canadian Coal Equality Act, the Coal Production Assistance Act and the Dominion Coal Board Act. Personally, I feel the time has come to consolidate the work of the coal board within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and I have no opposition to this bill in that respect.

I, too, would like to pay tribute to the members of the coal board who over the
[Mr. Fairweather.]

years have had a tough job to do. I think it is only right at this time that the members of this House recognize the job that they have done, and I believe have done well.

The Dominion Coal Board, as the parliamentary secretary has indicated, dealt with a variety of functions pertaining to coal. I think the primary function of the board was that of setting up and allocating subventions for the various coal mining areas of Canada. The parliamentary secretary has already referred to the amount of the subvention for the year 1967-68, which came to some \$33 million.

Personally, I am pleased to see that one year from now most of the subventions, as far as British Columbia and most of the other provinces are concerned, will have disappeared. It is to be noted that the development of certain coal resources has become uneconomic. While subsidies were paid on each ton of coal mined, the number of employees in the industry meant that these subsidies reached as high as almost \$3,000 per miner, which I think all will agree is very, very high. In other areas, the subsidy was well over \$2,000 per miner. When you reach this stage you begin to wonder whether it is not time to take a look at the industry and see whether there is some other development that could be better served economically by payment of this type of subvention. I am not going to go into this particular question. I am still of the opinion that subventions might have to be continued in certain parts of the country. However, I note that the coal board will be attached to the department, and therefore the board will continue to look into this particular problem.

There are one or two matters I should like to draw to the attention of the House. It seems to me that when you dissolve a department whose whole outlook has been directed toward coal and coal problems you are apt to forget in its incorporation into some new department some of the very important functions that have been carried on, in this case by the coal board. One of these functions was the role played by the board in the setting of freight rates. The board was party to the negotiations between the coal and railway companies when the railway was hauling supplies of coal to various parts of Canada. The Board had to be in the picture. I hope that in the reorganization, if I may call it that, of the coal board this very important function is not going to be overlooked.

In this connection, I should like to spend a moment or two underscoring the need for