

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

Mr. Argue: I would say there are some suggestions—

An hon. Member: Answer the question.

Mr. Argue: I think some of the suggestions as to increasing the efficiency of the industry are important. But that is an appropriate question for the hon. member to address to the minister. The minister is the person responsible. He has the report. He would not give it to us. He has it, so ask the minister what he thinks is wrong with the Vissac report. Apparently he does think something is wrong because he has not brought in a policy. To one who is not an expert on the coal industry this report does seem to contain some suggestions which warrant consideration and which call for a statement from the minister.

I think the government has adopted the worst possible attitude. The attitude taken by the government is to drift, to postpone, to procrastinate, to allow, as it did yesterday, one of the coal mines to end its operations, putting miners out of work. The only concrete policy the government has as far as I know is the establishment of a scheduled date for the closing of two more mines. If the government is going to need time—it may need time; it may need more time than it has got—in order to formulate a policy I say that during that time coal miners should not be put out on the street. When the government says it intends to formulate a long range policy to deal with this situation I contend that in the meantime the mines should be kept in operation and the miners should be kept in employment. They should not be put out of work while the government continues to procrastinate and postpone.

Mr. Woolliams: Would the hon. member permit a question? Coming from a coal mining constituency in Alberta I have listened with great interest to the hon. member for Assiniboia. Would he say that the strip miners who can produce at 50 per cent less cost than the coal miners who work in the mines, should be prevented from stripping coal and doing it at 50 per cent of the cost? I am interested in the hon. member's answer.

Mr. Argue: Only a man with legal training could take a question like that with real seriousness.

Mr. Woolliams: On a point of order. I would say on a point of order, Mr. Chairman, that if the leader or the hopeful leader of the C.C.F. party does not know the answer to that question it is clear he knows nothing about coal mining in western Canada.

Mr. Argue: I did not think even the hon. member for Bow River would support so strongly the statement I made a moment ago,

namely that only a legal mind such as his could concoct a question like that. Then he rose on a phony point of order, as even he is aware. This is the same old question. The hon. member says that if we are going to help the coal miners of Nova Scotia we are bound to do damage to coal miners who are stripping coal instead of mining deep coal. That is the answer of the Tory party. It is the nearest thing to a policy I have heard tonight. Evidently there is no unity in the Tory party on this question. It is obvious that the hon. gentleman is not expressing support for an improvement of the disastrous conditions which affect the coal miners of Nova Scotia.

On other occasions this session I have asked the minister whether the government was making any progress in discussions with the Ontario hydro commission for the further use of coal in new plants which are being constructed. I should like to repeat that question tonight for the record. I should like to have a report from the minister on what progress is being made to develop a larger market with the Ontario hydro for Nova Scotia coal.

It has already been said that a capital development commission is necessary for the maritimes. I suggest that one way the government could deal with this whole situation would be to provide a large sum of money for a maritime development commission. This money could be used to assist the mines, to assist in the development of new industries, to improve economic conditions in Nova Scotia and the maritimes generally so that unnecessary hardship of this kind could be avoided.

I criticize the government not for what it is doing, but for what it is not doing, for its lack of policy and its failure to tell parliament what its policy will be, and its failure in the meantime to prevent suffering, loss of employment and loss of income among the miners until such time as the government has formulated a long term policy.

Mr. Woolliams: I should like to ask the hon. member a question. He has taken his seat but will he answer one question. What will he do about the Alberta soft coal in the bituminous areas which is in competition with natural gas and petroleum. Natural gas is now being used to heat the farms and the homes in urban centres where coal was used for this purpose. What would the hon. member do about this situation?

Mr. Argue: I can tell the hon. member that if it were my responsibility there would be a policy in very short order.

Mr. Pickersgill: Why not ask the hon. member what he would do?

Mr. MacInnis: The hon. member for Assiniboia is an hon. gentleman who has been