

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

In other words, they just throw up their hands and confess that they cannot have any policy. Maybe they cannot have any policy for coal, but surely they could have a policy to provide work for the coal miners who are thrown out of work. That is what they should be doing, and that is what they should have been doing for the last year. That is the real complaint I have been seeking to make all through.

I should like to quote the words of an editorial in yesterday's *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, because I think this editorial states the situation clearly. It says in better fashion and more succinctly than I can, improvising here in the committee, exactly what the problem is. The editorial is called:

Cape Breton's Need.

It says:

The plan for meeting the latest Cape Breton coal crisis that has emerged from long and painful consultations between the federal government and Dosco is one of mixed blessings whose full effects will depend upon the type of follow-up action undertaken by Ottawa over the next few months.

That is what we want the minister to tell us. What is the follow-up going to be? We want to know the precise details of that. We do not want to be told, "After my estimates are over we will get up on the orders of the day and state something and you will not be able to debate it". We want to be told now.

Mr. Small: Something like you did; is that what you mean?

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, we always did, because we were capable of making up our minds, announcing our policy and allowing it to be debated. That is why Canada was growing from 1945 to 1957 and that is why it has stopped growing today. I thank the hon. member for reminding me.

Mr. Small: You had no mind to make up. C. D. Howe made it up for you.

Mr. Pickersgill: This editorial continues:

The final closing of the 99-year-old Caledonia mine at Glace Bay and of the north side's Florence and the 12-month reprieve given to New Waterford's No. 16, the best producer in quantity and quality of the three, follows the general pattern of the past in the contraction of the industry—a pattern for which there is, unfortunately, little better alternative in the face of today's stiffening competition in the fuel markets.

The hopes that had been held for a continuation of all three pits were flimsily-based from the start. Caledonia and Florence are classed as uneconomical, and to keep them going, even with the extension of the federal-provincial offer of a dollar per ton production subsidy, would have brought the whole Dominion Coal Company enterprise closer to bankruptcy.

Even with No. 16 kept open for another year through this special type of aid, it will be necessary to resort to short-time work weeks in all but the better metallurgical collieries such as No. 26

and McBean. The company says it cannot find consumers for much more than four million tons a year without considerably expanded governmental assistance. The remaining mines, including No. 16, to be left in operation after Florence's abandonment this summer have a combined output capacity of almost 4,700,000 tons.

More than 1,200 miners are to be affected by this year's closings. Some will be transferred to other pits and some will be retired on pension. But the net addition to the ranks of the jobless still will be close to, if not more than, 800.

Eight hundred men, practically all of them with families, and most of them with large families:

And when the extra lease on life for No. 16, which contributes almost half of the general income for the town of New Waterford, runs out in August of 1962 another thousand men will be idled. The \$1,500,000 which Ottawa is to provide for emergency employment on the island (in addition to the outlay in an extra year's production subsidies) will look after only a few hundred of these dislocated men and that apparently for a limited period in most cases.

Something more—

I draw your attention to these words.

—is obviously needed to avoid a further drastic economic setback for Cape Breton.

Mines minister Comtois has said this long term regional problem will get special federal attention.

We want to know what that attention is.

This consideration must go beyond merely more ad hoc palliatives and get into the realm of fiscal incentives to draw new industries into the region. Similarly, the possibility of Nova Scotia replacing the U.S. as supplier of the half million tons of bituminous consumed annually by Ottawa's own Polymer Corporation synthetic rubber plant at Sarnia should be further explored. Obtaining this market would be just about enough to rescue No. 16 from abandonment next year. Or at least to prevent the closing of further mines.

There is a real danger that, unless we get a good combination of ferreting out new coal markets within Canada and a bold, comprehensive government spearheaded program for revitalizing the entire industrial base of Cape Breton there will be a continuing, and likely accelerating, drift from bad to worse in its economy.

"We cannot cut this island off," royal commissioner Ivan Rand has said so rightly. "Canada, acting with Nova Scotia, must provide conditions to enable it to regain confidence and affirm its will to a new vitality".

And that goes for Springhill, Westville, Stellarton and the other mining communities of the mainland as well.

This, sir, is the problem with which we should be concerned, not what happened in 1957, 1947, 1937 or even 1867. The problem is here and now. The minister should get up now and tell us precisely what he is going to do to provide jobs for these men. He should tell us also whether or not he has spoken to his colleague, the Minister of Public Works, about the houses which many of these miners have bought, and for which they are not going to be able to pay. These houses are mortgaged to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This is another problem that