

Supply—Labour

Mr. MacEachen said the announcement of federal government grants to the multi-million dollar project will not solve all the economic problems of the industrial area but "I am hopeful that it will help stabilize operations in the steel segment of the Cape Breton economy."

I am sure the cabinet representative from Nova Scotia made that statement in good faith. I am sure, also, that some weeks ago the premier of Nova Scotia made his statement in good faith regarding the future of steel. In spite of all that these two hon. gentlemen have said, many, many people in the area have been laid off work. They have been laid off at the plant since these statements were made and prior to their having been made. Over a period of some months between 1,100 and 1,200 workers have been laid off, and the situation is most serious and grave.

I believe we are entitled to know from the company what the amount of this additional investment will be, what its purpose is and when the program can get under way. If governments are prepared to apply over \$5 million to the modernization of this plant as an indication of their confidence in the steel industry, it should be possible to give a projection in more specific terms on the long term future of the Sydney plant. I have already in this house and outside called for a study, investigation or inquiry, sponsored by the federal government, of this subject. The government already has sufficient information available to enable it to conclude such a study in a reasonably short period of time. The terms of reference should be very clear. Those appointed to carry out the study should be instructed that their job is to investigate the steel industry, specifically with a view to recommending ways in which the long term stability of the industry may be assured. This would encompass not only what marketing policies might be undertaken in co-operation with the federal government, but also what new industries related to steel might be established in Cape Breton Island. Also, we should know what the employment situation, in respect of year-round jobs, is going to be over a five or ten-year period.

I suggest, and I trust the minister is listening very carefully, that we should have a royal commission to investigate the steel industry in Nova Scotia. We had a royal commission studying the coal industry. We have had the Duncan commission. Since I am very young, I cannot recall whether that commission was concerned with coal or the economic prospects of the maritimes, but I think it dealt with coal or both. We have had the Rand

[Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria).]

commission on coal, the Carroll commission on coal, and the Donald commission on coal. We are dealing with the report of the Donald commission in respect of the legislation to establish the Cape Breton Development Corporation.

The long term objective of this industry is to widen and strengthen our economic base. An almost exclusive dependence on the ups and downs of one or two industries has been the historic weakness of the Cape Breton economy. It would appear that this government cannot get any information from the corporation as to what their present or future plans are, if any. It would appear that the government of Nova Scotia cannot get any information from this corporation as to what their plans are, present or future. It would appear that local municipal leaders and union leaders are unable to ascertain what this corporation will do in the future.

My time is limited, so therefore I urge the minister, who is a member of the cabinet and a maritimer, who met the delegation from Sydney and heard their briefs and representations in respect of the steel industry, to consider the suggestion I have made that a royal commission be appointed to study the steel industry of Nova Scotia. The minister should talk with his cabinet colleagues and give my suggestion every consideration, so that the people in Nova Scotia will know that perhaps something will be done in the future by this government.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, I suppose all I can do in less than a minute is to say that I have been waiting all day to make my speech but it looks as though I will have to save it for another day.

Mr. Pugh: There are 27 seconds to go.

Mr. Nicholson: Mr. Chairman, I have no idea whether other hon. members wish to speak on these estimates, but if the hon. gentleman is not going to be long perhaps we could hear him. I am not suggesting that we proceed with the other two items on the agenda, but perhaps we might conclude the discussion on the estimates of the Department of Labour this afternoon if there are no others who wish to speak.

Mr. Knowles: My speech was not going to be very long, but I know other hon. members wish to speak on these estimates and there are questions hon. members would like the minister to answer. Also, the hon. member for Brantford has a bill he would like to bring