

Mrs. Erola: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am very confused by the charges made by the hon. member. I wonder if he knows what the quality of the ore grade is in the mine that is being shut down.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the minister made that interjection. I have a grudging admiration for her as she sits amongst her cabinet colleagues. I have some sympathy for her because she has only been here two years and I know it is difficult for her to appreciate the way the government operates.

I have information on the ore quality in front of me, Mr. Speaker, but I have also listened to legitimate and professional opinion expressed to me by geologists and mining engineers in Uranium City. They say that the shutdown of this plant is not absolutely necessary and that at the very least the plant could remain in operation for longer than two or three years without seriously affecting the position of Eldorado.

I have already mentioned some of the expenditures that have been made and I know that the twin from Ottawa Centre would not want to do Saskatchewan out of any of its rightful entitlement. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Evans) went to Saskatchewan two weeks ago when he attended the provincial Liberal convention. It was held in a phone booth, Mr. Speaker! The parliamentary secretary went to offer a defence of the budget, so I am surprised to see him back in the House grinning as I know what kind of reception he received from the Saskatchewan Liberals. They had to send a delegation down here to see the minister and ask about the industrial and economic strategy—if there is any. He knows what pressure the very few Liberals left in Saskatchewan are under when they are faced with the dumbkopf and dumb-headed decisions such as those made in Uranium City and in the budget. He knows that the credibility of the Liberal Party is absolutely zero in Saskatchewan, if not right across the country.

A human tragedy is taking place in Uranium City, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of State for Mines will understand this as she comes from a mining community. She knows what is going to happen to the community, to families, to people who invested their life savings in an enterprise on the basis of statements made by Eldorado Nuclear in its annual report, its advertising and employment campaigns. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, bringing in 45 families about two weeks before the mine shutdown. Imagine bringing people from Atlantic Canada to northern Saskatchewan and then, the first time they go to collect their pay cheque, giving them a termination slip! That just boggles the mind.

The government has shut down this mine without a full and proper investigation of available alternatives. I am afraid the situation smacks very much of mismanagement and incompetence.

● (2040)

How could the minister tolerate a situation where the corporation continues to make new major investments in an

operation to build that new power plant, to put in extensive machinery, to move all of its support facilities, as well as building new housing and heating facilities for the workers, while it plans to close down the mine in the near future? The hopes of the people of the community were unnecessarily and falsely raised. Is it any wonder that the people of Uranium City are calling for an inquiry? Under the circumstances, how can this request be denied? I say that it would be laughable, if it were not so pathetic, to see the irony of the government bringing in legislation calling for joint planning in industrial shutdown situations, yet turning around and leaving the people of Uranium City to believe that their community's future is assured, and then announcing a shutdown and not being able to guarantee that the community will be fairly compensated.

Because of the lack of leadership on the part of this government, we must now look at legislation to cope with the uranium cities which will be springing up all over this country. A lack of any direction by this government and a lack of any sense of planning has caused this problem.

The Liberal government was once regarded as a reactive kind of government. Now it is regarded as a government of reaction. There has been a lack of any sense of empathy demonstrated by the leading spokesmen of this government for people who share the burden of the government's mismanagement and wrong decisions. When I go back to my constituency over the weekend, I cannot help but be impressed by the number of people who come up to me on the street and ask, "What does the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) think that he is doing? Does he not understand how the budget he has brought down is adversely affecting my small independent confectionery?"—or, "my small business", "my insurance company", or, "my insurance agency". Many people who have put in a lot of time with the railways in this country come up to me and say, "It is not much, we did not get paid much and we do not have much of a pension; but at least we have the right to pass on the railways of this country. Now we will be taxed on the benefits we have received".

Mr. Nickerson: It doesn't matter. There is no train anyway.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Many people come up and say they have made plans as a result of the government passing legislation in a budgetary context, but all of a sudden they find, having made those plans and having invested a lot of money in accountants and advice, that these items will now be taxed, and they will have to go through the expensive proposition of realigning and reconsidering their positions in terms of their business operations. The average man on the street bears the burden for the government's mismanagement. I will tell Your Honour one thing. People must feed themselves, and they will not be getting any free lunches, as far as the Minister of Finance is concerned.

Therefore, when I look at what is happening to Uranium City, I can say that I consider this to be the story of a shutdown of a town by a government. Then, reading this legislation in the context of that situation, one wonders what we are now talking about. Over the weekend, a letter was