

Proposed Minting of Gold Coins

We are all very anxious to do something to help the industry. The subject is of major concern to the principal gold producing provinces, but I repeat that in a more general way the welfare of an industry which has played so great a part in opening northern Canada and building up our national economy is a matter of interest and concern to all Canadians. It would certainly be a calamity if the wealth created by gold were to disappear without economic measures being taken to protect it pending an increase in the official price.

Mr. Karl A. Eyre (Timmins): Mr. Speaker, representing as I do a constituency which produces a large quantity of Canada's gold and within which are two or three communities dependent upon the production of gold for their economic existence, directly or indirectly, to the extent of about 90 per cent of their well-being, I am naturally greatly interested in the private member's bill now under discussion.

I am well aware that this bill presents many difficulties because of existing legislation, especially the present operations of the monetary fund. However, our gold mines are now operating under the monetary fund and the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act with modifications, and I cannot see any reason why other modifications could not be implemented with the thought in mind that any new approach to our problem might bear fruit.

If the bill now before us were put into operation to allow those mines which have chosen to do so to sell their product on the semi-free market, and other mines if they desired to do so, it would help them to obtain a better price for their product. If a mine chooses to have gold coins minted and marketed there is every reason to believe that large quantities of those token coins would be purchased for a number of reasons. An interest in gold coins might be the forerunner of the gold mining industry once again being on a self-supporting basis.

Since the inauguration of the monetary fund the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) and his colleagues have seen fit from time to time to press for and have modifications extended to Canada. The first was the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act, which was a good act. The second was the sale of gold on the semi-free market on a restricted basis. The third was the debasing changes in the refining of gold for sale on the semi-free market.

I am sure that if the Minister of Finance and his colleagues could be convinced that the minting of gold coins would help the industry they would give every consideration

to requesting further concessions for Canada from the monetary fund. What makes me confused and unable to comprehend the situation is that the House of Rothschild can purchase our gold and have gold coins minted and offered for sale. It must be a profitable enterprise or they would not be in the business. Therefore I suggest that we try the experiment of minting gold coins in connection with the mines that want to use that process, and which could operate under the bill before us.

Mrs. Ann Shipley (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I should like to crave your indulgence for a moment and take this opportunity of thanking hon. members for their kind reception. I feel that I must speak on any bill that might bring about an improvement in the conditions affecting the gold mining industry. I also have the honour of representing a riding which is almost entirely dependent upon this industry.

I think it was on November 30 that the hon. member for York South (Mr. Noseworthy) made certain statements respecting this industry which I believe were quite misleading and which did not give a true picture. I intend to answer him in some considerable detail at a more opportune time, either during the budget debate or when the Emergency Gold Mining Assistance Act is before the house.

I should like to say a few words about the state of the gold mining industry, and I intend to quote from an analysis presented by the gold mining association to the provincial ministers of mines at Niagara Falls last September. This is a national problem, of course, but I do have some figures relating to my own province. Incidentally Ontario produces 64 per cent of the gold produced by all lode gold mines in Canada. During the period 1941 to 1951, 35 per cent of the operating gold mines in Ontario discontinued operations; 74 per cent of the profits of the industry have been wiped out, and there are 40 per cent fewer men employed. I am sure that is typical of the situation in other provinces where gold mining is carried on.

The people in the gold mining areas do not like subsidies any better than you like voting them. We are a proud people. We feel that we have earned the right to be proud. The people in the gold mining areas pioneered that part of the country and opened it up. They have had to pass through some rather tough periods, but we have created great new wealth for this country. Our prospectors did something that was invaluable for the country. In their search for gold they found almost every base metal