

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

I say, let us consider it. I do not say let us do it, because these big projects require some study and consideration; but such study and consideration should be active and dynamic. Let us consider the possibility of building a big thermal plant on Cape Breton island with a view to shipping the power westward and shipping other power westward from New Brunswick, and so on. It does not all have to go the whole distance. We should consider this possibility with a view to providing another outlet for coal in the near future. You cannot build one of these plants overnight, but the building of such a plant would provide a lot of work and thereby provide alternative employment. It would provide cheap power right there in Cape Breton.

If that were coupled with the other suggestion which I put forward last night, and which I should like to repeat, that as a real inducement to secondary industry to come into Cape Breton the government should consider the possibility of providing at no cost, or at very low cost over a period of years, the necessary power to carry on in that area, then this would prevent the area from becoming a whole series of ghost towns. I say these are constructive suggestions that ought to be considered because I do not see how any Canadian, even if he lives in the Yukon, could contemplate the possibility—and it is a possibility today—of Cape Breton becoming a permanently distressed area with no outlet for the people there, no hope for them whatever.

It does seem to me, sir, that it is quite a shocking thing that 15 months after this government knew that at least two of these mines were going to close, no steps have been taken to provide alternative work for these people. We should have had a scheme ready to go into operation. Fifteen months is a long time. As a matter of fact the government has had three years, because ever since the slowdown of 1958 the government has known that there was going to be a decline. It is true that to slow down that decline is a wise thing. As I said last night, we on this side have always supported every effort of the government to spin that out. We supported those efforts because we hoped the government was going to do something constructive, not just sit on its hands.

I did not agree with everything contained in the Rand report. I did not think the Rand report was bold enough or imaginative enough. However, there were a lot of constructive suggestions in that report, and those suggestions should have been put into operation last November. Parliament met last November. We would have passed in one day a bill to carry out any of those constructive suggestions. Instead of following this course an

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

interdepartmental committee was set up. We are told now that we will not see what this interdepartmental committee has recommended until after these estimates have been passed.

This is no way to treat parliament. This is no way to carry on the government of the country. I suppose this interdepartmental committee was composed of able civil servants. I cannot conceive of them taking all this time to prepare a report. I suspect that in this case, as in every other case, the delay is caused by the constitutional inability of the present advisers to Her Majesty to make up their minds about anything. They just cannot decide on any course of action in any field. They wait until there is a crisis, then they try to start another investigation or vote a little money, not even knowing how they are going to spend it.

I say, sir, that we need a little responsibility in government in connection with this matter. According to the press the minister is chairman of the cabinet committee studying this subject. Of course parliament is not allowed to know this. The minister surely knows what they are going to do with that \$1.5 million. He should tell us now. In fact the government should be spending it now. The day before yesterday, when these men came out of the last shift at Caledonia, they should have been offered some jobs resulting from the expenditure of this million and a half dollars. Instead of that we find the government wringing its hands and saying, "We will be interested in receiving suggestions". This is not good enough.

Last night the hon. member for Cape Breton South blamed everybody he could think of; he blamed the U.M.W. and he blamed the company. He blamed everybody except the people who are really to blame, the ministers. We recall that when the hon. member's predecessor, Mr. Gillis, got up to speak about the situation in Cape Breton he always had constructive suggestions to put forward. I admit that they were not always practical, but unless you have suggestions you cannot find out whether or not they are practical. The hon. member for Cape Breton South is suggesting absolutely nothing to deal with this problem. He is just commending the government, stroking them nicely in the hope something may turn up.

Mr. MacInnis: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, certainly.

Mr. MacInnis: Would the hon. member admit that the suggestion he has put forward