

*Ministers' Statements***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

DISASTERS

GLACE BAY MINING TRAGEDY

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, during Question Period a question was raised with respect to the fire in Glace Bay. As the Minister responsible for Devco, I was wondering if I could just respond to that question. I have the very sad duty to inform the House of Commons that a fire started at about seven o'clock yesterday morning at the 2000 foot level of No. 26 colliery. Over 350 dedicated miners from Devco escaped, but unfortunately one of those miners is still missing and is presumed dead.

The mine was sealed off last night, the fire is still blazing and we are hoping to put it out as soon as possible. I have not as yet had discussions with the management of Devco with respect to the 1,100 plus miners who work in No. 26 colliery. That obviously will be our first priority as soon as the fire is out, but I thought Hon. Members would like to have this information.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. I want to comment regarding this tragedy in Glace Bay. The Minister has a major inquiry under way regarding the affairs of Devco. I simply recommend to the Minister that the safety regulations which the federal Government is responsible for administering be a part of this inquiry. The Minister will also take into account the plans the company has to open up two new mines and to decommission permanently No. 26 colliery, which has caused such incredible hardship, injury and deprivation to so many people since it was commissioned in 1943.

I would like to think that the Minister will make a statement in the House as soon as he is apprised of all the circumstances which led to this new disaster. I sincerely hope he will also be able to announce that, in connection with this particular accident, there will be a public inquiry, something which we have been deprived of in the past in connection with that particular mine.

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my concern to the Minister. A task force of ours has visited this mine. We have also been in touch with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) urging changes to the Canada Labour Code for stronger and stricter health and safety producers. When is the Minister of Labour going to bring in that legislation so that we can deal with this very, very urgent legislation which he knows needs upgrading?

• (1210)

POINT OF ORDER

MR. BLAIKIE—OPPORTUNITY FOR MORE QUESTIONS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order which arises out of Question Period. A week ago today, Mr. Speaker, you chose to share your thoughts with the House on the question of bell ringing. I would simply ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider formulating your thoughts on Question Period. I have the same concern which I think you have, Mr. Speaker, about what is happening to Question Period, particularly in the last week.

Question Period has always been a series of mini debates, but they are becoming maxi debates. It seemed to begin the other day when the Prime Minister almost filibustered Question Period. We are seeing more and more of that now. Fewer and fewer back-benchers in this Parliament are having an opportunity to ask questions, which is what Question Period is all about.

I do not know, Mr. Speaker, whether you are simply letting us slide until we muster the will to discipline ourselves. That may be a legitimate strategy. However, I, for one, Mr. Speaker, would urge you to use your role as Speaker to discipline the Question Period. If you do not feel people should be allowed supplementary questions, do not allow them. If you think the answers are too long, just get up and call for order. I was here briefly when Speaker Jerome was in the Chair. I remember that is what he used to do. People get used to it and discipline themselves. That is what we need if we are going to continue to have a Question Period worthy of the name.

Mr. Crosby: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The record will speak for itself, but I think there is some misunderstanding, almost a Kafka-like situation. When you interrupted me during my presentation under Standing Order 21, I understood that your complaint was that I had mentioned a Senator by name and that it was a violation of the rules of the House to mention a Senator by name. My point is that—

Mr. Speaker: Let us get it perfectly straight. It was an attack on an individual Senator by name. And two Hon. Members of the other place were mentioned. That is what is irregular, in the opinion of the Chair.

Mr. Crosby: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member cannot reflect on a decision of the Chair. I would be pleased to meet with him privately and have a discussion.

With regard to the matter raised by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), it seems to me this is now a matter for the Procedure and Organization Committee to consider. The Chair again would be at the disposal of Hon. Members and the committee to attempt to improve the situation. The Chair is in the hands of Hon. Members and a servant of Hon. Members. It is anxious to do its best in that capacity,