

*The Budget—Mr. Bourget*

over a sufficiently long period, which would make it possible to foresee necessary lay-offs.

With those facts on hand, a special committee could be set up to find ways and means of re-educating the employees concerned, so that they may adapt themselves to other available jobs resulting from the changes that will have come about.

Now, let's consider the second reason. There is no doubt that the introduction of new developments and of automation has resulted in equal productivity with a smaller number of employees.

I wonder if, in that case, it would not be appropriate to set up a system whereby the employees would devote a few days each month to the taking of theoretical and practical courses, in order to improve their general culture and knowledge of their respective trades. The workers could thus become more efficient and insure at the same time an increased production.

Of course those workers should, in that case, get the same salary, plus the benefits I have just mentioned. Such a system would also improve the employment situation. Perhaps it will be felt that it would involve additional expenses. Even if that were the case, I am sure that it would bring about appreciable dividends in the long run and that it would help provide a highly qualified labour force.

About the third reason, I believe the Canadian National Railways should entrust to its own employees a good part of the works which are now entrusted to private enterprise, unless it is a case of specialized works.

Our national railways, in particular, now has engineers, architects, and employees, who have a vast experience in all fields of construction, and I have no doubt that they could carry out those works as well, and at a cost that would be as advantageous as private companies. In that way, the laying off of many employees could be avoided.

Without entering into further details, those are, Mr. Speaker, the few suggestions I wanted to make to the government, and particularly to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Balcer) in connection with the Canadian National Railways and its employees.

If the Minister of Transport feels they can be useful, I hope he will not hesitate to discuss them with the officials concerned.

[Mr. Bourget.]

Let me now briefly refer to another question of great importance for the areas where shipyards are situated.

As the representative of a constituency particularly interested in shipbuilding, I want to draw the government's attention once more to the conditions prevailing in that industry. It is generally recognized today that operations in this field have substantially decreased and, unless the government takes vigorous action, we might rightfully wonder if the industry will survive.

At Lauzon, we have two shipyards. One of them now has 746 employees, whereas there were 1300 at the same date last year, and almost 1250 in January 1959. I have been informed that, by the end of February this year, the present number of 746 will be down to 600. They are now working on two ore-carriers, one of which is due to be completed in four weeks and the other in 18 weeks. After that the shipyard will only have a tanker and an escort vessel to build for the government. As the work on the last two ships is not to be finished before 1962 or 1963, the company will be unable to employ all the labour normally working in the shipyard.

The situation is still worse in the other shipyards as there are now only about a hundred men working there. That number will gradually increase to 300, because of a repair contract. However, I am told that this repair work will have to be completed at the beginning of April, and that will cause an important decrease in the number of people employed by the shipyard, and the latter will be left with only a little ship 120 feet long to build for the government.

But, Mr. Speaker, the sad plight of our shipyards at home does not differ from that of other shipyards in this country. Apart, perhaps, from two or three shipyards, the situation is hardly more encouraging elsewhere, for the 16 or 17 which exist in Canada.

Last December, I had the opportunity of reading the brief sent to the leaders of the various political parties, by union officials who pointed out the urgency of helping that industry, and, who at the same time submitted interesting suggestions.

I also read letters from shipyard employees in British Columbia who complained of losing their jobs and deplored the fact that many qualified men were emigrating to the United States in order to find some work.