

*Interim Supply*

vocational and technical institutions in the provinces, and 6,872 men were enrolled in these institutions across the country on a full time basis between April 1, 1960, and March 31, 1961. However these 6,000 men represent a rather insignificant fraction of the total number of people who have been displaced by automation and who are unable to find employment.

The annual report of the Department of Labour for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1961, unfortunately did not reveal how many of these people who had undertaken this retraining had actually obtained employment after they had completed their training in these institutions. We believe that in order to get to the essence of this thing we have to come up with some new ideas and new solutions.

**Mr. McGee:** Before the hon. member leaves that point may I ask him a question?

**Mr. Berger:** Go ahead.

**Mr. McGee:** Is the hon. member aware that in the last session of parliament his party denounced this technical and vocational training school building program as an extravagant waste of the taxpayers' money?

**Mr. Berger:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I of course hesitate to accept the interpretation that the hon. member has placed upon remarks that may have fallen from the lips of those who represented the C.C.F. party in the last House of Commons. At any rate, I was about to turn to what I consider to be far more fundamental solutions of this problem than those the government has so far advanced, and I suggest the first of these solutions ought to be a reduction in the hours of work.

Technology has reduced the unit cost of production; and that reduction which technology has given us is something that is far greater than any increase in unit cost of production that might occur as a result of reducing the hours of work. A reduction in the hours of work would in turn increase the number of jobs available.

Other steps could be taken to mitigate the problem of the displacement of labour by automation. We ought to try to keep our young people longer at school. We in this party believe that vocational, technical and academic training at all stages and all ages should be available, regardless of ability to pay, to every man, woman and child in the country. This means not only the abolition of tuition fees but it also means living-in grants and other means of assisting young people to obtain the very best education that they can.

We also believe we should try to work out a program for earlier retirement. Today many men and women are tied to jobs because they

realize that leaving them may involve the loss of accumulated pension benefits, sickness and accident benefits, health insurance benefits and the like. We in this party have for some time advocated a system of portable pensions, a national health insurance plan and adequate old age pensions, all these things being measures that would enable people to look forward to retirement with a sense of security. They would enable people to retire earlier than they otherwise would, and would enable them to enjoy the prospects which retirement ought to bring to every citizen. There are no simple solutions to automation but the government should work on the solutions that we in this corner have advanced.

Let me remind the government that if it were able to get the economy moving again—as it claims it has done even though to the rest of us that does not appear to be the case—if there were an annual rate of economic growth of 5 or 6 per cent, that in itself would not be adequate to provide jobs for those who will continue to be displaced by automation as a result of the increase in the rate of technological progress. Therefore the government ought to look at the revolutionary impact which automation already is having on the country. The shorter working week is one suggestion, and the proposal to shorten the working lifetime of men and women is one that the government may consider to be radical, or even revolutionary. But although such proposals might alter existing social patterns, they would not create social problems. They would provide social opportunities for all our citizens, opportunities which have been enjoyed up to this point by only a fraction of our people.

We have heard in previous speeches that some hon. members sitting in other parts of the house regard social and economic planning as an imposition of some kind of regimentation upon our people. This, of course, is complete nonsense. As far as we are concerned, social and economic planning is a means of affording to every citizen fundamental human rights which I suggest no other party in this house is prepared to recognize, the right to health services and medical care, the right to a job, the right to education, the right to security in retirement, the right to a decent and adequate old age pension. These are fundamental social and economic rights which for too long have been neglected by this government and its predecessor.

This government has assumed responsibility for the future of our economy. It has assumed responsibility for bringing about full employment, but it is unwilling to take the steps that are necessary to discharge the responsibility it has assumed. Nothing, in the view

[Mr. Berger.]