

*Supply—Labour*

basis sooner than has been possible under the circumstances, and the workers concerned also could have arranged their own lives and have made plans for themselves and their families different from the ones a number of them probably made. They would have made different plans than they did when they believed they would have steady employment except for lay-offs due to model changes or possible down-turns in the market for the product of the company. I suspect that a number of workers may have previously made commitments to purchase automobiles, appliances or homes, or else to move into new rented premises based on the expectation of continued employment over the next 18 months period, except for what might be considered to be more or less normal lay-offs because of model changes in the industry.

Second, I think that now that we have had a greater degree of experience with the operation of the transitional assistance benefits program put into effect by the government to assist workers involved in technological change arising out of adjustment due to the automotive pact, when they are not eligible for supplemental unemployment benefits, the time has come to take a good look at this program and to examine very carefully the need for modifications in the existing program. Certainly I think the contention of the unions concerned that transitional assistance benefits should be available even when workers are eligible for supplemental unemployment benefits is one that has a lot of merit. The union argues, with merit, that supplemental unemployment benefits are something that was negotiated by workers as part of the total wage package to tide them over what might be considered normal and expected lay-offs for model changes or down-turns in the market, not for lay-offs of the type that come about through the expansion or changes of plant to adjust to different opportunities in markets lined with changes in government policy.

Also I think another conclusion to be drawn is that the government should encourage companies to take a look at their operations in nearby communities or the same community. If, as I understand is the case in the Windsor area, other plants which are part of the same operation are working with a high degree of overtime, then something should be done, instead of merely having the group of workers in the plants not affected by the technological change piling up overtime, to make some of the work available to workers

[Mr. Gray.]

laid off from plants where technological changes are being carried out. Certainly those concerned would much rather be working for normal wages and in normal working conditions than receiving assistance through special programs designed to cushion the impact of lay-offs.

I might also add that in the case of the first lay-off of the Ford Motor Company at Windsor which is just taking place, many of the workers are quite young and many have not completed their high school education. Therefore every effort must be made to encourage them and to give them an opportunity to retrain and upgrade their education so that this period of lay-off could be used to give them greater opportunity in later years for a more secure employment involving higher degrees of skill.

• (9:20 p.m.)

Now, Mr. Chairman, industry and business often complain about government intervention in what they deem to be their private affairs. It seems to me that any industry of the size of the auto industry, one with such an impact on the total economy, there is almost nothing that is strictly an internal matter and does not affect the community in which the operations are carried out or for that matter the entire country. Even though in the long run it may turn out to be beneficial to the community as I believe this expansion of the Ford Motor Company will, I think it leads in the long run to more government intervention rather than less when the human factor such as the interest of the workers concerned is not taken into account, at least to the same extent as the problems of planning production with respect to raw materials and machinery, certainly you cannot put workers into some form of suspended animation; you cannot put them in some warehouse as you would a machine that is not needed for a few months until some plant is rebuilt.

I think that the industry has to be more conscious of its responsibility to its workers to help them adjust to the impact of technological change. Certainly, if this responsibility is not forthcoming on a more voluntary basis, then it would seem to me, within the constitutional authority available to the various levels of government, public opinion will lead to government intervention even more than has been the case in the past to make sure that the human factor is given attention, and to make sure that the industrial development