

Labour Conditions

this change. Let us therefore exert this leadership so that this second industrial revolution will really be a victory for Canada and the Canadian people.

(Translation):

Mr. Lessard (Lake St. John): Mr. Chairman, I welcome the introduction of this resolution, and I think the whole house welcomes it also. We are all the more happy about it as it gives us the opportunity of examining the most serious problem facing the Canadian people at the moment.

At this stage of the introduction of this resolution by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr), we must limit ourselves to its consideration as a whole, and see whether it could improve the present economic situation.

It seems, Mr. Chairman, that we are still harbouring this concept which prevailed many years ago, that is, that production is inadequate.

I believe that we must come to the conclusion today, in this century in which we live, that the main problem is not one of production.

If we go back 200 years, we realize that there was then a problem of production, there was a scarcity of consumer goods for the people. But as a result of the evolution of production methods, and of the discoveries which were made by the inventors who preceded us, we have seen production increase over the years to the point where it now satisfies all reasonable needs.

I do not suggest that, at present, all countries have found a solution to their needs in all fields, but if we consider all problems facing Canada at present, I think we can say that production is not the greatest.

We have discussed agriculture here for several days, we have proposed all kinds of measures to help farmers to produce more and better. But I think this problem will stay with us for a long time yet, in fact, as long as we consider work as an end in itself, and as long as we do not reconsider our economic philosophy.

In my opinion, the problem of production has now been solved to a great extent.

We even hear that there is overproduction, agricultural as well as industrial overproduction. And, in many areas—particularly in the one I represent—there are problems of agricultural and industrial overproduction.

[Mr. Gray.]

I do not think, Mr. Chairman, that what we call "overproduction" is really overproduction, it is rather "underconsumption". If all peoples of the world, and all Canadians in particular could get what they need, there would not be any overproduction, and we would all have to get to work in order to satisfy their needs.

So, it is not a production problem, but a distribution problem, and causes at the basis of this problem reach very deep, I would say they even go as far back as the beginning of civilization.

I think that as long as we stick to our present economic and financial system, we will always be faced with a distribution problem, a problem of under-employment, a problem of lack of purchasing power for the consumers. It is suggested that people should get more educated and that workers should prepare for jobs which will be available. We may always have those mechanical and technological changes but I ask you sincerely to consider those changes which increasingly take manpower away from the production line. The purpose of this bill is to get men ready to go and take up other jobs in other plants. As the hon. member who spoke before me was saying, I do not find it reasonable to imagine that we are going to put workers in mobile houses so that they can travel with their families from one place to another to fill the available jobs. In my opinion, we should consider the problem more open-mindedly, on a broader basis, because work is not an end in itself, it is not a goal, but a means to an end, and that is why, consequently, we have to work.

Today, when I hear people tell us that we need plants to make our people work, well, I feel that principle is false to begin with. We do not have to build plants to make our people work, because a plant is not meant to provide employment, but to produce goods which the consumers and the people need.

As long as production is achieved, I feel that the goal is reached. If we can entirely eliminate entirely any manual labour to complete that production, if we are able to design machines that will eliminate all manual labour, or human participation in production, we will have something to crow about, because it will be the victory of the genius of man over matter. We should be glad of it, but because of our present economic concept, we are obliged to deplore, I would even say mourn, the fact that machines are introduced in our plants.

Being a worker myself, I have been able to notice the degree of insecurity that the industrial worker feels now about his job.