

Supply—Labour

the human factor to which I have been referring.

At approximately 11 a.m. last Friday, November 15, the Ford Motor Company announced it would be creating a second engine plant as part of its Windsor operations. The *Windsor Star* speculated it would be a multi-million dollar program and estimated it would cost in the neighbourhood of \$100 million. The work involved would mean the converting of an existing chassis plant to high volume engine production. The work would take some 18 months, but in the meantime a total of some 1,000 men would have to be laid off while their present place of employment was being converted to the high volume engine production I have just mentioned. The company claimed at the time of its announcement that not only would the 1,000 men in question be called back to work in the new plant but that there would be 200 and perhaps as many as 365 new jobs added to the 1,000 existing before the plant was converted.

However, not only was notice of only approximately one week given to the workers concerned, but even the federal government departments—the Department of Labour and the Department of Manpower and Immigration which were going to be called upon to put programs into effect to ease the burden of the lay-offs on these workers—were not given more than a week's notice of the lay-offs. The first announcement said that the first lay-off would be of some 475 men but this was later amended so that 338 men would be laid off only a week later.

Mr. Broadbent: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Gray: I will be very happy to answer the hon. member's question after I have concluded my remarks. I will not be speaking at any great length.

I do not claim to be an expert in the field of automobile production and on industrial matters of that sort, but I find it difficult to see how a company could decide to spend \$100 million on a new engine plant only about a week before the work began. I suspect the project in question took many months of planning, and it seems to me more could and should have been done to plan the work with the workers concerned.

In a report in *The Windsor Star* for Friday, November 15, the president of the Ford Motor Company said:

We have been building engines in Windsor for a long, long time... One of the best labour forces in North America is to be found here.

If this is true, and I think I and the people in our community would agree that it is, then something more should have been done to make sure that not only the morale but also the material well-being of this labour force was maintained during this lay-off to the greatest possible degree.

It is true that in the initial announcement of the lay-off the Ford Motor Company suggested that—and here I am quoting from the press release issued by the company at the time—

—eligible employees who are temporarily laid off may draw benefits under the company-paid supplemental unemployment benefits program. When combined with unemployment insurance benefits the total can amount to almost 95 per cent of take-home pay.

Of course, as has already been pointed out in statements both outside and inside this house, this is not exactly the whole story because at least 338 of the workers concerned have been hired only since approximately August 19 of this year. Therefore there is a question whether they would be eligible for unemployment insurance and to what extent if any they would be eligible even for the transitional benefits which are available for people who cannot get the supplemental unemployment benefits referred to in the company's statement. Of course, it can be guessed that the first group who are being laid off this weekend would not have worked long enough at the Ford Motor Company to qualify for the supplemental unemployment benefits. Also, even though the next lay-off is not going to come until some time in February one has to speculate also on how many of the others to be laid off will actually draw the equivalent of 95 per cent of the take-home pay mentioned in the release.

In any event, it would seem to me that this particular incident is one from which a number of conclusions can be drawn. First, it seems to me that it is essential that companies carrying out changes of this type give a longer period of notice to the workers and to the government, departments which will be called upon to assist them during this kind of lay-off. Certainly if a longer period of notice had been given, government departments could have begun putting into effect programs that are now being implemented on a crash