

Supply—Industry

Mr. Orlikow: It is very fine for the minister, the hon. member for Essex East, for me and everyone else here to be philosophical and say this is a temporary lay-off. After all, we are paid every month as long as we remain members of parliament. Ford workers who have been laid off for the next 18 months will not be paid—

Mr. Pepin: They get 95 per cent of their income, do they not?

An hon. Member: All of them?

Mr. Orlikow: I think the minister will find that only those workers who have worked with the company for some period of time will benefit to that extent. A substantial number of the people who have been laid off, in fact, practically all, are new employees who will obtain little benefit from the company's supplementary benefits. The minister ought to read the speeches of the hon. member for Essex East who told us precisely what would happen. I say that what has happened ought not to have happened. When the plan was drafted the union representing the Canadian automobile workers did not oppose it. In fact, the union endorsed and welcomed the plan and called on the government to take precautionary steps to ensure that the workers would receive the kind of sweet, loving attention which the government gave to the employers. We looked after the employers in this field by giving them what amounted to a \$50 million subsidy under new tariff arrangements.

When the employers are caught in a squeeze because of any rationalization brought about by the automobile plan, they are looked after. Yet, as the union said in 1965, the government simply refuses to make a similar kind of provision for the employees. The government knew what would happen because the unions warned it. The minister need only look at the correspondence that two former ministers of labour, Mr. Nicholson and the present Minister of Manpower and Immigration, have had on the subject to see that this is so. The unions proposed a series of measures to protect workers who would be caught in the squeeze.

Credit must be given where credit is owing, and I must say that the minister was interested in this matter. The deputy minister of labour, Dr. Hawthorne, was most interested in the union's proposals. Why did the government not go ahead with those proposals? I will tell you why, Mr. Chairman. Because the companies refused to co-operate—that's why

[Mr. Pepin.]

—and because the government did not have the courage to bring in legislation implementing the union's proposals and the proposals made by Mr. Justice Freedman.

Although I was not here last week when the estimates of the Department of Labour were before the house I read the minister's speech and I commend him for it. After the speeches we had from the former minister of labour, last week's speech certainly sounded wonderful. All the same, two years have elapsed since Mr. Justice Freedman handed down his report. How long must we wait before the suggestions of the report are implemented in legislation? The former minister did not think it was necessary to pass legislation in this field, believing that the companies, out of the goodness of their hearts, would adopt the basic principles of the Freedman report through collective bargaining. Of course, that has not happened. How many legal or illegal stoppages must we undergo before the government brings in legislation to implement the suggestions of the Freedman report?

Now we are told that we must wait for the Woods commission to make its report. When will that be? If the Woods commission makes no special recommendations about the basic principles of the Freedman report, must we wait for the findings of another committee or another commission? We are dealing with human lives and, at the moment, with 1,000 jobs. The Ford Motor Company at Windsor has acted in a way no different from the way thousands of other Canadian corporate employers have acted.

Our labour legislation says that except where there is a special clause in a labour-management agreement that prohibits a company from acting in a certain manner, a company has the right to manage its own affairs. The corollary to all this is that when a company makes a change such as is now contemplated while an agreement is in force the union by law is precluded from striking. While an agreement between the union and the company is in force the union is estopped from doing anything about the sort of change we see here. I can only say that had the government listened to what the unions said in 1965, had it set up the kind of labour-management discussions that was then suggested and had it followed through with the legislation that was proposed, this kind of thing would not have happened. The government must have known what would happen if it did not listen.