

*Supply—Labour*

Insurance companies, public utilities and banks are using these to an increasing extent.

It is very difficult at this stage to estimate the impact of automation upon the labour force in Canada. There undoubtedly have been cases where it has resulted in lay-offs of individual workers at specific plants. There is some evidence to indicate, however, that the Canadian experience so far has been that the expansion of company business and normal labour turnover, coupled with planned policies on transfer and retraining, have gone and can go a considerable way toward successfully meeting the human challenge posed by the new methods and machines.

Nevertheless, what the cumulative effect will be on the situation in local areas or on the national economy is still not clear. It has been suggested that the employee displaced by automation is the one who is not hired. That is to say, the main result may be important changes in the kinds of job opportunities available for new entrants to the labour force. One difficulty is that the effects created depend on many other factors: the degree of prosperity in the national economy; levels of employment and unemployment in alternative occupations; the speed with which new or extended job opportunities open up in the tertiary service industries; and the rate at which technological changes themselves spread throughout Canadian industry.

It is because of the scarcity of reliable data on the effects of automation that our intention in the Department of Labour has been to carry out, and stimulate elsewhere, as much research as possible on these effects in industry and in business offices. In the department we have been conducting for the past two years a number of detailed and more general studies of automation and its effects. The findings of some of these investigations have already been published and given wide circulation.

To help us in securing the facts about automation and its consequences we established two years ago a small technical advisory committee consisting of representatives from industry, from labour and from Canadian universities. I made mention of that in the committee last week when we were discussing the estimates of our department.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** Under the chairmanship of—

**Mr. Starr:** Mr. Haythorne.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** A splendid man.

**Mr. Starr:** We have reviewed our research plans with this committee and discussed our findings with them and in this way received

useful advice and suggestions. This committee will be meeting again in May to discuss this work further.

As I have indicated, it has seemed to us that there was not enough reliable information about automation and its effects on manpower to provide a foundation for a fully useful discussion by any large committee or conference. Our approach at this stage, therefore, has been to make use of a smaller advisory committee to work with us in the basic job of assembling the facts. This is the foundation on which any more general discussion should be based. I must say that for the past two years we have been working on automation in the automobile industry.

**Mr. Herridge:** On that point I should like to ask the minister a question. I think I have been most restrained this afternoon. Are these investigations carried out in the smaller centres and in the smaller industries? I think the picture there is in some cases changing faster than it is in some of the larger industries. The picture so far as automation is concerned has changed very rapidly in the last five years and if these investigations are not carried out in the smaller centres and industries they will not actually reflect the true picture throughout the country.

**Mr. Starr:** Automation in general has been carried out in the larger industries rather than the smaller ones. We have made studies of the electrical products industry, the heavy machinery industry, the household goods industry and the automobile industry.

**Mr. Herridge:** I think the minister's department should make some investigation into the sawmill industry in view of the thousands of feet of lumber that are being cut per man per day compared with even ten years ago. The same thing applies to logging in some cases. Years ago it was considered to be a good day's work to put 1,000 feet of logs on the beach per man per day but in our district it has now reached 10,000 feet per day per man. That shows the effect of automation even in the smaller logging enterprises and smaller sawmills.

**Mr. Carter:** Can the minister advise the house whether he has any information on similar studies being carried on in the United States with regard to this question? The reason I ask is that I saw a report recently indicating that the pre-recession level of production had been attained in the United States with a million fewer people in the labour force. The inference was that the million fewer jobs was due to automation. Can the minister confirm anything like that from United States inquiries?