

*Supply*

Having said that, I congratulate the Hon. Member for St. John's East. In a highly political way he has put an important issue on the table. He deserves to be commended for that initiative. His initiative has led to some interesting and thoughtful interventions this afternoon. We had input from the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Lang), the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell), the Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) and others. Their comments will be of guidance to the policy-makers of this country as to how to approach the question of technological change.

With the inevitable fear that the issue of technological change is creating among Canadians, it would be worthwhile to put on record a quotation that dates back to 1931. The then Director of the International Labour Organization stated that one of the factors in the unemployment program at that time was "the disorganization of the labour market caused by the extra rapid development of labour-saving machinery and the process of rationalization".

We all have to realize the effect of the new processes on the labour market in the eighties which are vastly greater than they were in the thirties. In 1931, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Director at the International Labour Organization reported, in his evidence of the effects of mechanical improvements on employment, that the agricultural combine deprives five agricultural workers of employment. In Canada the number of such combines increased from two in 1922 to some 7,215 in 1929. In that way a displacement of some 36,000 workers took place over a period of seven years. I doubt, however, whether in the 1980s we will have as much breathing space available as was available in the twenties.

● (1640)

The technological revolution that we are debating here today seems to be embodied in the miniaturized computer which has introduced into the industrial process an element of automation. The problem facing us is not a question of whether the process is good or bad; it is how we handle the process, how we manage it.

It seems to me that the Hon. Member from Yorkton-Melville, in his intervention, put his finger on what seems to me to be the essence of the approach that should be developed. That is that we must consider the effect of technological change on employment, on income distribution, on health and safety, and on labour relations. We can learn how to manage these effects by putting a human face on technological change. If at the center of our concern are the men and women affected by the change, then I believe we will have learned from the agricultural and industrial revolution of past decades and we will have learned the important lessons that those changes taught us to the benefit of present and future generations. This seems to me to be the essence of what this debate is all about.

In 1982 we established a task force on microelectronics and employment. It was conducted by Dr. Margaret Fulton and was completed last November. It was produced in the form of a very concise report entitled "In the CHIPS: Opportunities for Employment". Since then it has been the object of intense consultations with labour and management, because, of course,

the recommendations contained therein touch on these facets of technological change.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that this technological change will affect the pattern of demand for labour. It will probably produce a surplus of unskilled workers and a shortage of skilled workers. It will create a necessity for training of the specialized kind that there is presently under the National Training Act and to which the motion before us makes reference. It will probably have an effect on workers in the service industry, and particularly, I suppose, on office workers. Technological change will probably have an effect on hours of work, on part-time work, on work sharing, and perhaps it will have a considerable effect on the question of early retirement and ways of inducing it and facilitating it for those who wish to take advantage of such possibilities.

On the side of health and safety, Mr. Speaker, technological change could also bring about new hazards, possibly with a greater influence on psychological problems. Therefore, the dangers of technological change in relation to health and safety may not be as evident as they were in the past and it will require greater research to prevent their occurrence.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Member from St. John's East because he has put on the table perhaps the most important issue that faces not only this Government but any Government that has an industrial concern and a labour force that is affected by technological change. This issue is that there will probably have to be greater flexibility in the future on the part of management and labour and that there will have to be some form of partnership developed between labour, management and Governments in the future. It is quite possible that management will have to give up more of its residual rights, become more democratic and encourage forms of co-determination and co-management. We have heard echoes of this from other countries in the past decade and these echoes are now reaching our shores. Maybe labour will have to be reassured so that it can accept the inevitable change. The assurance that should be given to labour is the assurance of some form of job security and employment growth.

This leads me to refer to the budget again as I did a moment ago, because contained in the budget is an important element which some speakers on the opposite side have seemed to overlook, although not all of them have. I regret that I have not heard all of the interventions. This element in the budget is the reference to a centre of productivity and employment growth. That centre is an instrument of a highly technical nature where technological change will be the focus, a forum where business and Government can bring to the fore experience at the shop floor level, as they say, bring to the attention of all the experience of the front line of the workplace in order to find some short-term answers to questions that have been of concern to some of the speakers on the opposite side. Those, of course, are the concerns of the Government as well. Beyond that, evidently answers will have to be found of a medium-term