

Supply—Labour

much research is being done on the preparation of these figures, and how much is being done about checking the sampling technique, because I have a very real concern about its accuracy. I know that an effort has been made—and I am not accusing the government of anything because I know that when we were in office we made an effort—to purge these employment service lists of names of people who had already got jobs or who had really left the labour market, and tried to keep them as a reflection of people who were really looking for jobs. I know also they are taken once a week. They are always going to exaggerate to some degree, I admit, the number of people who are unemployed but there does seem to me to be a really serious disparity between these two figures on which more real study is needed than appears to have been given, judging by such debate as we have had in the house up to now.

Mr. Starr: In answer to the question of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, may I say that these figures have intrigued me ever since I have taken over the responsibility. I found upon inquiry that this trend of the difference has always been in existence between the D.B.S. figures and the other figures.

Mr. Pickersgill: Always a difference, yes.

Mr. Starr: On the same basis, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Pickersgill: The proportions are getting worse.

Mr. Starr: In the summer time they are closer together and then when seasonal unemployment starts, winter lay-offs start, the gap widens in that respect. That is the only explanation I have been able to get on this difference.

Mr. Pickersgill: There is one other thing I would like to say. The minister will remember that when he was over on this side of the house his measure of unemployment, and that of his associates over here, was always the national employment service figure, but then, on June 21, he saw a great light on the road to Damascus and since that date the figure for unemployment has always been the lower figure.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): It was not Paul.

Mr. Pickersgill: It was not Paul, either, as the hon. member for Essex East pointed out, on this occasion who saw the light on the road to Damascus. It may not have been the road to Damascus; it may merely have been the road to the Confederation building. But I must say that I cannot help but have the

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

feeling that a lot more research should be done not merely into the categories of figures but perhaps because, when all is said and done—as the Prime Minister told us on one famous occasion—unemployment is not a statistic. There should be a study of who these people really are and what the kinds of employment are, and a lot more work. I am not arguing that the minister should employ a lot more people in this branch but I am just wondering whether the kind of practical, hard study, realistic study is being carried on that should be carried on.

Mr. Starr: Yes; I am assured that extensive research and continual research is being made in this respect.

May I answer the hon. member for Essex East who requested an explanation of automation? I would like to make this statement, Mr. Chairman. New labour-saving machines and more efficient production methods have been a feature of industry and business in Canada for as long as these have existed. What is new today, and it is affecting both the factory and the business office, is the increased pace at which technological changes are taking place and the way in which new automatic equipment is performing a whole range of production or office tasks rather than only one or two relatively simple operations.

It is very easy to become confused when discussing automation because this type of technological change can take many different forms. One type, for instance, involves the use of specialized machinery which carries out a pre-set number of operations with almost no human intervention. Such machines, although becoming more numerous, have been in use in many manufacturing industries for quite a few years.

A second kind of automation involves the integration of materials handling and a number of processing operations. Transfer equipment, for example, automatically carries the work from one automatic machine to another. This is usually called Detroit automation and in Canada is found in only a very few firms, mainly in the automobile industry.

A third type of automation involves the use of automatic electrical or electronic control systems. These are fairly common and have been a feature of some industries for many years. This is the type of automation found in oil refineries, electric power stations, communications and a number of other newer fields, such as railway yards and sheet steel production.

A final type of automation involves the use of electronic computers and data processing machines. Such equipment can be used for research work and for office work where large volumes of data have to be processed.