

Supply—Labour

The deputy minister of public health in Ontario, Mr. James S. Band, said, not more than a year and a half ago, that within ten years four workers out of five would lose their jobs on account of industrial automation.

I think that from a human and social stand point, this is an almost tragic consequence.

The Canadian Labour Congress bulletin quoted also, in its February 1961 issue, the result of a study made by Mr. W. R. Dymond, director of economics and research, Department of Labour, and submitted to the Senate manpower committee.

It is a very short paragraph, but I should like to read it for the hon. members:

(Text):

In the ten years since 1949, production in the Canadian motor vehicle industry rose 49.8 per cent, while employment rose only 11 per cent. In the motor vehicle parts industry, production rose 19.7 per cent, and employment 6.8 per cent; in electrical apparatus and supplies, production rose 81.6 per cent and employment 40.6 per cent; in the machinery industry, production rose 33.7 per cent and employment 16.8 per cent; in household appliances, production rose 53.7 per cent and employment 19.3 per cent.

(Translation):

Even though the Minister of Labour created, within his department, a research division which studied and is still studying the impact of industrial automation, I would ask him to extend further this survey on automation.

He could ask for the opinions of representatives of management and labour, of universities, of provincial and municipal governments and agriculture, and set up a commission, even at this late date. That should have been done long ago.

I think that the committee which is now studying the question, with the best intentions in the world and the most qualified people, does not go far enough in its inquiry, apart from the fact that its staff is not large enough to do the job entrusted to it.

Social implications and effects of technological progress must be considered with the thought of what is to be man's part in that progress, and above all of what the impact of automation is likely to be on our social structure.

I know that the Minister of Labour is concerned with these questions but he seems to be the only one among his cabinet colleagues to consider this problem. He should ask people from industry to help him.

Since 1957, the government has often urged an improvement in relationships between employers and employees. This is a good opportunity to get together representatives from those two groups because both employers and employees are interested in that

question. Canadians as a whole are particularly interested in that question.

A commission should be appointed to study the full impact of automation throughout the country, and I am sure that solutions will be submitted to it which—even if some are long term solutions—will contribute to eradicate or at least decrease to a great extent that social plague of unemployment which is a sore on our present system.

I already said on many occasions that I believe in free enterprise, but I also believe in the intervention of higher authorities whenever and wherever free enterprise cannot or does not wish to fulfil its duties.

Some companies may attach a little more importance to their profits than to their social role in the development of a country or its economy.

I urge the minister to consider those suggestions and I am looking forward to the day when, at last, concrete solutions will be found to unemployment.

(Text):

Mr. Chevrier: I wonder if I could have the attention of the house to make a suggestion to the house leader, which I hope will be of a constructive nature. It is not my intention in anything I intend to say now to be critical, but I am mindful of the fact that there is some urgency about getting these supplementary estimates through the house. Again I repeat I do not want to be critical of those who have taken up the time of the house, because they have been from the other side of the house as well as from this side.

What I want to say is that we are not prepared to give up our right to criticize these very large supplementary estimates, particularly when we have no assurance that we shall have a chance to debate the main estimates for next year. However we are not anxious to contribute to hardship which might result if bills were not paid, and particularly if salaries and wages were not paid. Therefore, if the Minister of Finance will give us detailed particulars of the votes where real hardship might result we shall immediately consider them first, for our part, and deal with them quickly, and if the minister wants to go a step further and wishes to incorporate the urgent items in a special appropriation bill we shall facilitate that procedure; but we do not intend to submit to indirect pressure to restrict debate on expenditures in this free parliament.

I thought, Mr. Chairman, that it might be helpful if I rose a few minutes before