

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

● (10:20 p.m.)

after having received representations from many sources the minister admitted that this new service would bring unemployment to the region. Previously, inside and outside this chamber, he had denied on behalf of the government that there would be unemployment. He said that employment opportunities would go up and not down, and that the port of North Sydney had a bright, extremely bright, economic future so far as Canadian National operations there were concerned. Having said that, only then did he concede that the institution of the rail car ferry would have an impact on employment at the port. He said some existing employment would decline but that new jobs would be created and many economic advantages would accrue to the communities affected, by reason of the increase in traffic, to use his words.

Now, as a result of this government's action through the Canadian National, what do we find? During the busy summer season as many as 1,000 men are employed at the port of North Sydney, the average number employed all year being 700. According to statements by C.N.R. management, the new service will reduce the work force to 150 men. A minimum of 600 men will be without jobs.

Workers at Port aux Basques and Argientia will also be affected. This industry is the economic backbone of North Sydney, and all the surrounding districts from which workers come will also be hit badly. As I have already said, all this has been brought about as a result of this government's actions through the Canadian National.

You are aware, Mr. Speaker, that time and again over these many months I have pressed the government in this chamber about what it would do for these workers who will be unemployed, face hardships and be dislocated because of modernization and technological change. It is true that upgrading of educational standards has taken place. Co-operating together, the federal and provincial governments, the Canadian National and the town of North Sydney have sponsored a school for stevedores. This is all well and good. I give full marks to the government for this effort to prepare men for training. But what of the future? In a short period of time these layoffs will commence. Where will these men find other employment? The Department of Industry—and I am glad to see the Minister of Industry (Mr. Drury) here tonight—has not been successful in bringing a new industry to the town of North Sydney.

Some time ago the workers in the automobile industry were affected in a somewhat similar manner as a result of the Canada-United States automotive parts agreement. I have a pamphlet here in my hand issued by the then minister of labour, the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen), who is the minister from Nova Scotia. It deals with the transitional assistance benefit program for the automobile workers, and in part is as follows:

The program, introduced in June, 1965, was designed to apply to all workers whose employment is adversely affected by the Canada-United States automotive agreement—

It went on to state that the program would run through until July 26, 1969, and that payments would be available to the workers affected. That program was introduced because of the government's action in making that agreement with the United States in regard to automobile parts, and it provided that the men would have a period of about four years in which to find permanent employment. Why is there not a program instituted to assist these workers who are to be laid off at the port of North Sydney?

It is a somewhat similar situation to that of the automobile workers. The problem is not caused by a lack of markets in the area. It is a question of technological change and modernization brought about by the government, as a result of which a lot of people will be laid off and unemployed.

I would suggest and recommend to the government that it consider some sort of arrangement along the lines of the transitional assistance benefit program, better known as TAB, to help the workers at the port of North Sydney. Following the minister's statement in 1965 he held a press conference in Halifax, on July 24 of that year, at which the Minister of National Health and Welfare was present. The Minister of National Health and Welfare on that occasion gave the assurance that proposals had been under consideration for many months to adjust any worker displacements that might occur at North Sydney. According to a press report in the *Chronicle-Herald*:

He and Mr. Pickersgill both assured the public that new programs were under consideration, and also that there would not be as much displacement of workers as far as North Sydney was concerned as had been reported. The introduction of stern-loading ships would eliminate much freight handling.