

Supply—Labour

lem arises largely from technological change. How many people realize the difficulties that are involved? We have about 4,500 workers involved, stevedores or longshoremen, in the three ports of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec. As a result of new changes in the handling of cargoes that are to be loaded and unloaded, you can get along today with modern equipment with a cut of a minimum of 10 per cent in the work force. This is the same kind of technological change that concerned us all when we were considering the Freedman report. Herein lies the basic difficulty—the difficulty that lies in finding a solution to this very serious problem in the ports of the province of Quebec.

We have been fortunate in the dock strike in having one of our most experienced, patient and respected men—I do not know how to describe him because he was not acting as a jurist but as a mediator—in the person of Judge Lippé to act in this dispute.

During the short period that I was away from the house between the question period this morning and this afternoon, I have received another interim report, perhaps I should say the fourth interim report but the second of two extended reports, from Judge Lippé. The negotiations seem to have reached a stalemate, which arises out of nothing more than technological change. The longshoremen naturally are concerned with the possible loss of jobs. The shipping federation are naturally concerned with competitive costs when they are faced with possible competitive shipments from Portland, Boston, New York, St. John's Halifax or other ports. They have to consider their position in this highly competitive age. If the longshoremen crews, which have for some years numbered 18, have to be reduced to 15 or 16 as a result of technological change, in my view, the ship operators are not to be blamed for trying to reach that objective. On the other hand it is not surprising that the longshoremen are concerned with their future and their families. Naturally they want to see a study made and a solution found which will not work too great a hardship on the workmen.

At the suggestion of the mediator, I am meeting this afternoon at five o'clock here in Ottawa with the bargaining representatives of both the shipping federation and the longshoremen. I hope that out of this meeting a recommendation or an agreement on a course of action will be arrived at which will enable us to find a peaceful settlement of this dispute. You will appreciate how very serious is

the situation when you have to consider 4,500 longshoremen. As you know, in general there is a surplus of longshoremen because of the short season that prevails in the ports of Montreal and Quebec. It appears that there is always a reserve of longshoremen. You might think that over the life of a two-year contract, two extra longshoremen per gang could be absorbed. However, it is not as simple as that. If you have a crew of 18 longshoremen out of 4,500 and you want to reduce the number to 16, it means a reduction of, say approximately 450 persons. However, if you have a reserve crew of 900, then because of the peculiar situation of the St. Lawrence which only moves wheat seven or eight months a year, you are not just dealing with 450 men through attrition or otherwise, because you have to take into consideration the 900 people who are kept in reserve.

I only hope that over the week end we will be able to find a practical solution because it means so much not only to the people of Quebec, to the farmers of Quebec, to Expo '67, but also our prairie farmers, particularly the farmers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, who have to move their wheat during the open season of navigation on the St. Lawrence.

Technological change is one of the most serious problems with which we will have to cope in Canada in the months directly ahead. I say also that one of the most important documents—I say this advisedly—which we have had to consider as members of parliament in the past several years, certainly in the relatively short time that I have been here, is the Freedman report. Mr. Justice Freedman undertook to serve as chairman of an industrial inquiry commission on the run-throughs on the railways. The proposals which he made following his penetrating and comprehensive analysis are now the subject of a very widespread discussion not only in this house but by industry, particularly the railways, the unions and government circles on all levels. This report is a most significant document. While you may question some of the philosophical observations made by this learned jurist—and he does embark on some philosophy he deserves the very sincere thanks of the Canadian people for an excellent job well done.

● (2:40 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nicholson: It may not be necessary for parliament to deal with that report. I hope it