

Labour Conditions

This is another indication of the fact that this government, on all occasions when it has been faced with labour problems and other matters, has sat back on its haunches and done nothing until these situations have become critical.

This matter is not completed as yet. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Industry if he was aware of the lay-offs that were announced by General Motors affecting St. Catharines and Windsor. To this he replied again in the negative. The government is not prepared to do anything about these matters. This morning the newspapers contained an announcement that another 300 workers were being laid off by General Motors, 250 in Oshawa, 20 in Ste. Therese, Quebec and 20 in London, Ontario.

These lay-offs have been taking place every day, every week and every month since last December. All this government does is announce in the House of Commons that we do not have training facilities. It is about time they realized all these lay-offs are taking place as a result of the poor policies of this government.

Mr. Winkler: And no interest shown by the hon. member for Essex East.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Windsor never had as many people at work.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): It is unfortunate the minister has not got a breakdown—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Douglas:—though I think he is on his way toward one. It is unfortunate he does not have a breakdown as to the number of the 5,700 individuals who have been laid off in the automotive industry whose unemployment is due to the Canada-United States auto agreement, and those who may have been laid off for other reasons. The government has a definite responsibility with regard to those who have been laid off as a result of the auto pact. One of the two undertakings we were given by the Minister of Industry when this auto agreement was being discussed was that adequate provision would be made for the retraining of those employees who were displaced as a result of the pact. The other undertaking was, of course, that there would be greater parity of prices in Canada as compared to the United States.

There has been compliance with neither of these undertakings. In the case of workers in
[Mr. Starr.]

the auto industry it is quite apparent now, according to the statement made by Mr. George Burt, Canadian director of the U.A.W., that there are thousands of auto workers who are not able to obtain alternative employment and who have not been able to secure retraining through the department of manpower.

This is an extremely serious situation. It seems to me that the minister cannot shuffle off on to the Ontario government the blame for the fact that there are not adequate facilities to train these men. When the Canadian government signed the auto pact they undertook to see that there would be adequate facilities to take care of training. This is a responsibility which is theirs and which they cannot shuffle off on to anyone else.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, none of the requests made by the men themselves or their representatives has been met. One of the first was that a committee should be set up on which the employers, the union and the government would be represented so the men would have notice from time to time as to the number who were going to be laid off, so the government would be acquainted with what training facilities would be required, and so there could be a co-ordinated effort to cope with this problem.

All we have had from the Minister of Labour, Mr. Speaker, are repeated statements that he has been unable to persuade the employers to agree to the setting up of such a committee. Surely one of the terms laid down in the agreement should have been that the employers would be prepared to sit down with government and union representatives to work out solutions to the problems confronting the men displaced under the auto agreement.

I want to say to the government, Mr. Speaker, that so far they have completely failed to meet their responsibilities to these men as well as to the Canadian people at large. I do not put all the blame on the minister of manpower; he has inherited this problem as a result of the lack of foresight on the part of the ministers who concocted this agreement and went into it without adequate preparation to meet the problems which an auto agreement was bound to produce.

SYDNEY, N.S.—LAY-OFFS AT STEEL PLANT

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was questioned about the employment and training situation in Sydney Nova