

*Supply—Labour*

attempt to find some solution to this extremely grave situation.

I have not been in this office long enough to be able to say whether the solution lies in the establishment of arbitration or of labour courts, such as those that have been set up in Australia and other countries of the world. The answer may lie in that kind of action because, while they have had divided success, on the whole they have been successful. I throw that idea out as something that merits the serious consideration of all members of this house and of all Canadians.

It is quite obvious that part of the difficulties in which we find ourselves today results from our prosperity. We are enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity in Canada. During 1965 total employment increased in Canada by over 250,000 people—one quarter of a million. This is the first time this has happened since long before the outbreak of the second world war. I think it is worthy of note that the increase in employment of young people under the age of 25 has increased. This is most gratifying, especially in view of the number of young people who will be coming forward to enter the labour force in the next few years.

Employment is well over seven million in Canada today. Not only has employment increased but, happily, unemployment continues to decline, in spite of the problems to which I have referred. The unemployment rate has, as recent figures show, declined to just slightly above 3 per cent of the labour force, which is the figure that the Economic Council of Canada proposed as the annual target for Canada on a seasonally adjusted basis.

There is another very significant matter, and this is a sign of our prosperity. The average weekly wages and salaries of Canadians between 1964 and 1965 increased by 7 per cent. As the consumer price index rose by only 2.4 per cent there certainly has been a substantial increase in the real, the genuine, purchasing power of Canadians. Working conditions in Canada have also continued to improve. A survey of my department covering over two million workers in non-agricultural industries indicated that the members of the Canadian work force generally now have a five-day, 40-hour week. In addition to this they enjoy a two-week paid vacation, with a third and sometimes a fourth week for workers with longer periods of service. They also have six or more paid

holidays a year, and under the Labour (Standards) Code they have eight paid holidays. In addition, many of them enjoy pensions and other welfare benefits.

I would be the first to concede, of course, that these are average figures and that not all workers enjoy these benefits. Unfortunately some enjoy less than the average, but I can say with ample justification that the Labour (Standards) Code, which was passed by this house and by parliament last year, is having a very important and significant effect in this respect.

One other rather significant fact comes to my mind. A study of collective bargaining made by my department showed that of the 240 major collective agreements that were signed in 1965, and that is a very significant number, almost one half were for periods of three years or more, rather than the usual one or two year maximum periods. It is interesting to note that this study revealed that clauses on technological change have become more common in 1965. These clauses generally have taken the form of requiring an employer to give a union advanced notice of technological change, and to set up labour-management committees to deal with all the problems that are associated with these changes.

● (2:30 p.m.)

Over the past two and a half weeks many questions have been asked in this house concerning the dock strike in Montreal. It is a very serious situation. Of the incidents to which I have referred earlier, it is perhaps the most serious problem confronting us in the economic field in Canada today. We have to find a solution, have to bring about a settlement of this strike in Montreal, and we have to find it in the shortest possible time because there are huge quantities of wheat to be shipped from Canada. There are also essential food products which must be moved from western Canada to Quebec to supply feed for the chickens, pigs and other animals that need food in that particular province. They have to rely on us westerners for some help in the matter of food supplies.

All these are serious problems. We also have problems to solve in connection with Expo '67 and the goods that are needed to meet their target date of early next year. We have to find a solution to this problem. If we could have found a solution to it a week or two ago, we would all have been very happy. However, I doubt if 10 per cent of the members of this house know that this prob-

[Mr. Nicholson.]