

Supply—Labour

Mr. MacEachen: No, Mr. Chairman. We could not accept the view that our policy should be determined by the final outcome of the policy in the United States. We could not do that in the Department of Labour or elsewhere. At the moment, however, as we see their plan developing our plan is as good, and I think definitely superior in certain aspects with respect to protections for workers, because under our proposal the SUB fund and the SUB credits for workers will be fully protected and not used up, and thus will be available for subsequent lay-offs. This is a very important point that is not covered in the United States. The companies are also requested to come forward to assist in the transition, which is not being done in the United States, although it has been asked by leading members of the Congressional Committee.

The hon. Member for St. Hyacinthe-Bagot has asked about the application of this new lead to other situations in the country. That is a matter of Government policy which is under consideration and any decision in this regard will be announced in the usual way.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister a question about the estimate on unemployment. I want to say that this supplementary vote and the other one brought in by the Minister of Industry, which has just been dealt with, ought to be called two items for the repair of the damage done by the Minister of Industry who in his haste concocted an agreement without looking fully into what the effects of the agreement would be. When this agreement, which was signed by the Minister of Industry on behalf of the Government and never referred to Parliament, was first made public we drew attention to the fact that there were three groups of people to whom some attention would have to be paid.

● (4:50 p.m.)

The first were the workers who would be unemployed and would suffer economic dislocation; second, the small parts manufacturers who would have to retool their plants or relocate them, and third, the consumers of Canada who are losing some \$50 million a year because of the access given United States cars and parts into Canada, and who have a right to expect cheaper cars.

Now, the first two calamities have come about, the unemployment and dislocation of the small parts manufacturers. Unfortunately, we have not seen the third effect, which is

[Mr. Scott.]

an improvement in the price of Canadian cars. I think it will be quite a while until we see any improvement in that direction. I regret that both the previous item, with which we dealt, and this one have been brought into the House merely as supplementary estimates. It seems to me we ought to have had legislation so that there would be spelled out on the statute books the precise terms and conditions under which these various plans will operate. Both of them are going to operate on an ad hoc basis, with very little detailed information except what we can collect in this short period when these two items are before the Committee of Supply.

I want to protest most vigorously this method of dealing with such an important question as the dislocation of hundreds of workers in the automobile industry, without any legislation and without any real information as to the kind of plans which the Government has devised in the hope of providing some amelioration during this dislocation period. I wanted to ask the Minister something about the \$5 million estimate. Has the Department of Labour or the Department of Industry made any estimate of the total number of workers in the automobile industry who are likely to be unemployed as a result of this agreement? Has the Minister any information as to the average length of time this unemployment is likely to continue? Has the Minister's department made any estimate as to the total amount of money that will be required? Is this \$5 million simply a figure pulled out of the air, just as the Minister of Industry did in providing an estimate of assistance to the small parts manufacturers, or is it based on any figure as to how many persons are likely to be unemployed? I should like the Minister to give us some idea of the research that has been done in this field. We want to know whether or not this \$5 million is adequate and over what period of time it is likely to be needed.

Mr. MacEachen: I will be frank with the hon. Member and say it is difficult to make any precise estimate because of the pattern of the lay-offs, which is difficult to determine. As an illustration, I may say that the projection of lay-offs by the Ford Motor Company changed at times from week to week. We have attempted to make estimates of the cost, for example, of the Ford lay-off, but they are just as good as the assumptions about the length or duration of the lay-off and the number involved, and these change very quickly.