

Redundancies at North Sydney Ferry Terminal Licenciements au Terminus de North Sydney

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Résumé de l'article

Les méthodes utilisées pour manipuler la marchandise transportée par bateau entre North Sydney et Pointe-aux-Basques étaient lentes et désuètes. La situation fut étudiée par le Canadien National et le Département du Transport et on proposa une solution qui permettait de réduire le nombre d'employés requis de 800 réguliers et 200 temporaires à 100 employés réguliers en 1968. 900 personnes allaient donc être affectées par ce changement.

L'union internationale de débardeurs et le Canadien national s'unirent pour former un comité conjoint comprenant trois représentants chacun. Les recommandations du Comité devaient être soumises à la Compagnie et à l'Union pour étude et, si elles étaient approuvées, elles devaient être mises en application par un coordonnateur qui agissait comme secrétaire du Comité.

Le Comité devait étudier la possibilité de trouver de nouveaux emplois aux employés mis-à-pied. A cette fin, il devait:

- découvrir les capacités des hommes mis-à-pied;
- découvrir des sources d'emploi;
- entraîner les individus;
- éliminer les obstacles soulevés par le transfert.

Le Comité décida de faire le travail lui-même au lieu de le confier à des experts malgré les difficultés qu'une telle procédure pouvait engendrer. Mais il s'assura de la coopération d'autres personnes ou organismes, plus particulièrement les ministères provinciaux de l'Éducation et du Travail.

Le Comité étudia donc les conséquences du changement technologique qu'on voulait implanter, les opportunités d'emplois ainsi que les qualifications des personnes mises-à-pied. Puis il fallut trouver une façon de motiver les individus à s'aider eux-mêmes et à se prévaloir des avantages qu'on mettait à leur disposition. Ceci se fit surtout au moyen d'entrevues conduites par deux spécialistes employés à cette fin.

L'étape suivante fut d'améliorer le niveau général d'instruction des hommes affectés par le changement. On se mit à la recherche d'instructeurs qualifiés et on mit en branle un premier programme de cours auquel un grand nombre d'individus et d'organismes collaborèrent activement.

Le problème principal auquel le Comité aura à faire face est le transfert de ces hommes mis-à-pied d'ici l'automne 1967. La plupart des obstacles au transfert sont d'ordre psychologique.

Le Comité a déjà fait entreprendre une étude sur les causes réduisant la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre à North Sydney et projette une étude semblable au sujet d'habitants du Cap Breton déménagés à Kingston.

Enfin, quoique la responsabilité première du Comité soit à l'égard des hommes affectés par le changement technologique, le Comité a aussi l'intention de faire tout en son pouvoir pour aider la communauté locale aussi affectée par le changement.

Redundancies at North Sydney Ferry Terminal

Roy E. George

In 1968, following technical change at the North Sydney Ferry Terminal, the working force needed will be 100 men instead of 800 working regularly and 200 on a part time basis. In this article, the author analyses the human problems arising from a technological change and the solutions brought forward by a committee.

Introduction

This is a story of human problems arising from a technological change and how they are being handled. The principal roles are taken by the North Sydney stevedores, the International Longshoremen's Association, the Canadian National Railway Company and the departments of Labour and Education of the federal and Nova Scotia governments with strong support from many other organizations and people. I shall explain my part later, but it is important that I should stress at the outset that all the interpretations and opinions expressed in this paper are my own entirely. I have no mandate or right to speak for anyone but myself.

The Problems

The ferry service between North Sydney¹ and Port-aux-Basques or Argentia is the main link by water between Newfoundland and the rest of Canada. It carries all the rail-freight and, particularly during the tourist season, much of the passenger traffic to and from that province. The Canadian National Railway Company operates it as agent of the federal Department of Transport.

Freight arriving at the terminal is unloaded from the rail-cars,

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(1) During some winter periods, ice prevents the use of North Sydney. The service is then usually carried on from Mulgrave, Nova Scotia.

packed in containers or on pallets and reloaded onto the ferry or chartered boats. The reverse operation is carried out when boats are received. This method tends to be slow and expensive in wages, and to result in handling damage. In addition, the increasing demands for both freight-carriage and passenger accommodation were already straining the capacity of the service and serious bottle-necks were threatening.²

The situation was therefore studied by the Department of Transport in consultation with C.N.R., and a plan drawn up. It involves the rebuilding of the terminal, the purchase of new boats and the modification of the old. When all changes are completed, the freight cars will be shunted straight on to the boats, thus eliminating most of the stevedoring work at present needed. Completion date is set for the end of 1968, but a partial change-over to the new procedures will take place in the fall of 1967.

At present, some 800 men earn their livelihood from stevedoring at the terminal and about another 200 work there part-time. By the time the change-over is complete, only about 100 will be needed. Some 700 face the prospect of being without work at that time and a further 200 will lose part of their livelihood — about half the redundancies occurring in the fall of 1967, the rest at the end of 1968.³ The district already has a relatively high level of unemployment and the prospects of re-absorption locally are bleak; and the skills of the stevedore do not equip him for many types of work other than labouring.

About three-quarters of the redundant men live in North Sydney. This represents about one-third of the town's total male labour force and, as female participation in the labour force is small, about one-quarter of all its available jobs. While the manning of the extra boats will create new jobs which, in numbers at least, will counter-balance

(2) Pressure upon the service due to increasing demands was not something new. And there had been previous attempts to deal with it. Only a few years previously, a new dock had been built, a side-loading ferry introduced and container — and pallet-loading started. But these measures had afforded only temporary relief.

(3) A small number of redundancies amongst clerks and shopcraftsmen at the terminal are also expected to occur and another 550 men will become redundant at the Newfoundland terminals. The men concerned are however represented by other unions and are not directly the concern of the machinery set up to deal with the North stevedores. Their position is not therefore referred to in this paper.

about one-third of the redundancies, the impact upon the township will be considerable, especially when the effects of reduced consumer demand are felt by the service industries. And, since some of the redundant men live in nearby small towns, the effects will be felt beyond the limits of North Sydney.

Machinery for Handling Problems

The International Longshoremen's Association, (as the union of the men concerned), the Canadian National Railway Company (as the employer), and the federal government (as the initiator of the changes which created the situation) were all directly concerned in this matter in one way or another.⁴ The I.L.A. seemed destined to lose 80% of its membership of the North Sydney Local and was determined to ensure fair treatment for its redundant members.⁵ The C.N.R., conscious of public criticism of one or two local lapses from its normally high standard of public responsibility, was determined that there would be no inadequacies on its part on this occasion. And the federal government, under some political criticism for its handling of the whole affair, had a strong incentive to help to solve the problems.

The ball was set rolling by the I.L.A. and the C.N.R. when they joined together to form a joint consultative committee. Its membership consisted of three representatives appointed by the company and three by the union, and its terms of reference were to:

conduct studies into the manpower problems associated with long-shore and related operations at North Sydney which might result from changes planned in the Company's ferry service between North Sydney, N.S. and Newfoundland ports and perform other functions related thereto.

Recommendations arrived at by the Committee would go to the company and the union for consideration. If approved, they would be implemented by a Manpower Co-ordinator who, for the sake of convenience, would also act as Secretary to the Committee.

(4) As the problem has arisen in Nova Scotia, the Government of Nova Scotia was of course also directly concerned. Its contribution, however, came mainly at a later stage and will be described in a subsequent section.

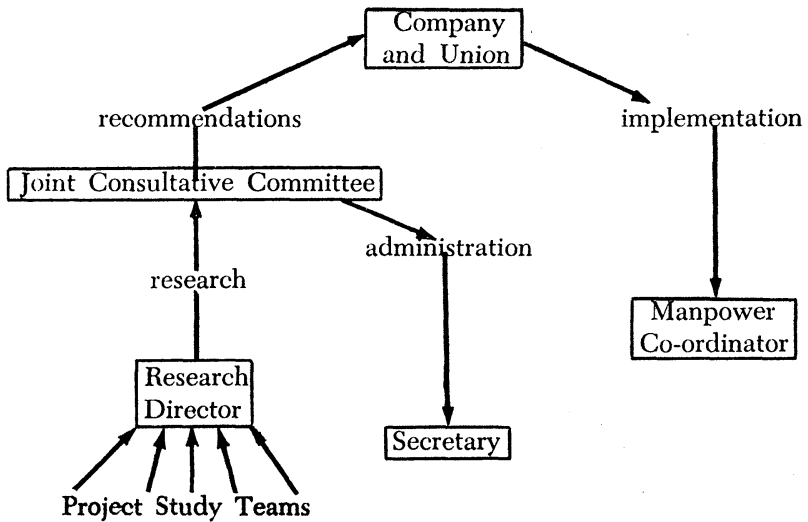
(5) To limit its own internal problems, the union proposed a change in the conditions for entry into membership in a way which would virtually freeze it at what it had been when the plan was announced. This was accepted and implemented.

The major role of the committee was therefore research. To assist in this, it was decided to appoint a Research Director who would:

propose a plan of assessment and study, the results of which were intended and designed to make a practical contribution to the most effective manpower adjustments...

It was also hoped that the presence of a neutral person belonging to neither company nor union might contribute to the smooth-running of the Committee.

The proposed organization therefore was as represented in the following chart:



Project Study Teams

Although the research function was formally separated from the implementation function, it was appreciated that the two would be closely interwoven. The vesting of the two posts of Secretary to the Committee and Manpower Co-ordinator in the one man (who was a special assistant to the Senior area officials) was a recognition of this.

The good offices of the Manpower Consultative Service had been used from the inception of the project. Once the Committee had been set up, formal application was made to the Minister of Labour for assistance through the Service. This was approved and an agreement between the union, the company and the Minister was signed on 19th November 1965. Under this agreement, the Minister undertook to defray 50% of the research costs, the company 40% and the union 10%.⁶

The Committee held its first meeting on 14th December 1965 and I was appointed Research Director on that day.

Objects

The Committee was faced with the task of trying to discover ways in which the redundant men could be reabsorbed into new jobs with the least possible hardship.

To do this it had to:

- (a) discover the characteristics of the men ;
- (b) find out what alternative employment would be available ;
- (c) train the men so that they could fill the expected vacancies ;
- (d) clear away obstacles to transfer.

Approach to Problem

The Committee had firstly to decide its *modus operandi*. It might have engaged experts to investigate the problems objectively and recommend appropriate action. This method seemed direct and promised quick and well-conceived solutions. There did, however, seem to be a danger that the recommended solutions, however expertly thought out, might have proved unacceptable to the union or the company or both.

The opposite approach was therefore adopted. The union and the company decided to think their way through the problems together and to contribute jointly to their solution. No action was to be taken until a method was discovered which would meet both viewpoints. This would not mean that expert advice would not be sought; but the two

(6) A limit was placed upon the Union's liability. When that limit was reached, the company's share would rise to 50%. In determining appropriate shares, account was taken of the problems which would face the union local because of the severe reduction in membership which would result from the redundancies.

parties on the Committee agreed to seek it together, to consider the advice together and to move when they agreed which way they wanted to go.

I admit to having had some doubts about this method of approach when I first heard about it. While I agreed with the philosophy of 'going it together', I was apprehensive lest the workings of the Committee should become tedious and frustrating. However, although it is much too early to be sure of anything, the policy seems to have worked hands down. All members of the Committee have contributed personally to the research and arrangements and the results obtained have been readily accepted by all.

One area of difficulty arose because some members of the Committee had loyalties and responsibilities to persons outside the Committee. Fortunately, the union representative were also the senior officers of the local, so their position was relatively simple; but one or two company officials were in a potentially awkward situation. To try to headoff problems, as well as to preserve a feeling of corporate responsibility for decisions of the Committee, it was agreed at the outset that all proceedings of the Committee would be regarded as confidential to the members. Members would therefore consider themselves as independent individuals, so far as the Committee's affairs were concerned, rather than as delegates to pursue the policies of their superiors. Things have worked out very well in this respect, although I have caught a few hints of minor difficulty at times.

The general approach to the problem within the Committee — a sort of universal involvement in the research and policy formation — was also extended to outside bodies. It was clear that the success of the operation would depend upon the active co-operation of many persons and organizations. Great pains were therefore taken to bring others into the picture from the beginning. The provincial departments of Labour and Education would obviously play a large part in the exercise; and there were always the delicate problems of federal-provincial relationships to watch. So representatives of these departments were invited to the first meeting of the Committee. Local education officials were also consulted and invited to participate in designing and setting up courses. Problems of resettlement have also been discussed with the local managers of the National Employment Service. And the impact of the changes upon the local community

have been examined with the North Sydney Town Council and Chamber of Commerce, and an offer of the company to carry out an industrial survey has been accepted.

I should not like to imply that the Committee thought of everything in this matter of consultation and involvement. One or two slants were overlooked and a hurried repair action became necessary. But I consider that, generally, the approach has been outstandingly successful — although it would be foolish to be smug at this very early stage.

Impact of Changes

Obviously the first thing the Committee needed to do was to assess accurately how big the redundancy problem would be. This sounds easy enough, but there were one or two complicating circumstances. Firstly, a man gets into stevedoring at North Sydney by taking work at the terminal whenever it is available, supplementing his earnings from outside jobs as far as he is able. Gradually, when this work becomes more regular and he satisfies certain conditions, he is accepted into the union and comes to rely almost entirely on his earnings from stevedoring. So there is a body of regular stevedores who are union men; but there is also a considerable number of persons at the fringe, many of whom have other occupations. And, secondly, it was of course not easy to know precisely what the eventual impact of the technical changes upon the size and nature of the labour force would be. With three years to go from the date of the original public announcement and the conclusion of the reconstruction, it was clear that many ends in the technical plans would remain to be tidied up. However, an assessment of the eventual results is being pressed on very energetically and, to ensure that all members of the Committee know all there is to know, the first item on the agenda of each meeting is « Technical Plans ».

Employment Opportunities

The next important matter requiring the Committee's attention was the assessment of what employment opportunities there would be for the redundant men.

Fortunately, the changes in methods of work at the ferry terminal are to be accompanied by an increase in the number of vessels in service.

It is expected that rather more than two hundred new jobs would be created in this way.

Some difficulties were foreseen in matching redundant men with the new jobs. Three unions were involved — one (the C.B. of R.T.) catering for the ships' crews, and two (the I.L.A. in North Sydney and the B.R.S.C. in Newfoundland) which hoped to have the vacancies earmarked for their members. And there were the problems associated with bulletining arrangements and seniority claims, and medical and legal requirements. Discussions were however undertaken between members of the Committee and all the parties involved and, in such a complicated situation, it says a lot for the spirit of co-operation shown by everyone that mutually-acceptable arrangements were quickly made. The first exercise of manning new boats has been successfully completed and some ex-stevedores have become seamen after a two-week on-job course especially arranged for them.

Vacancies were of course always arising in other parts of the C.N. system. With relatively large-scale redundancies in the offing, it was important that the North Sydney men should be made aware of the opportunities within the company which might be available to them. A system of publicising all vacancies within the region was therefore instigated. The system creaked badly at first but the notifications are flowing through now fairly regularly.

Few North Sydney men are showing much interest in these vacancies. Partly this is because the rates of pay offered are usually markedly inferior to what they are receiving as stevedores; but there are other reasons which will be mentioned later. The few men who have left the district to take these new jobs have nearly all been back before anyone realized they had gone. However, the important thing is that the potentially-redundant men should have the opportunity of these alternative jobs, even if they do not want them at the moment.

There also seemed a possibility that vacancies might be found for some of the younger and better educated men in the company's apprenticeship scheme. But the usual age and educational standards for admission precluded most of these who might otherwise have been suitable. So a recommendation went from the Committee to the company asking for some relaxation of the conditions. This has now been agreed to in part. North Sydney men who complete appropriate

educational courses sponsored by the Committee (more will be said about these courses shortly) will be considered to have met the educational requirements and a lifting of the age ceiling is half-promised.

However, while employment opportunities within the C.N. system will have to be exploited to the maximum extent, it seems clear that most of the men will have to find jobs in other industries. Most men are firmly attached to their own district, so the Committee is anxious to see a study undertaken which will show how many vacancies would be likely to arise in Cape Breton during the following three years. Discussions were held with provincial and federal government departments and agencies to discover if the information required was already being produced. It quickly became apparent that studying Cape Breton had become a national pastime. It was, however, also just as clear that all the studies at present underway were unco-ordinated and could not yield anything like the complete picture the Committee needed. So we had to look elsewhere.

As the redundant men would all be Nova Scotians, it was hoped that the Nova Scotia Department of Labour might feel able to undertake or commission an appropriate study. Discussions were held with officials of that department and, as a result, they have undertaken to explore with the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration the possibility of treating North Sydney as a « pilot project ». If this materialises, much of the economic and sociological research work in which the Committee is interested may be covered under the one all-embracing project.

If nothing comes of the « pilot project » idea, the Committee will probably like to commission its own study. The problem will, however, be to find a competent person to undertake it. Economists are scarce and mostly heavily engrossed in long-term research, and a preliminary hunt has drawn a blank.

If all else fails, a modest exercise might be undertaken with resources within the Committee, seeking to establish recent employment trends in various industries in Cape Breton and projecting them over the next few years.

Manpower Assessment

In any exercise to try to match men and jobs, one clearly needs to know a lot about the men. Employment records kept at North Sydney

by C.N.R. were pretty skimpy, so the Committee had to face the prospect of a fairly large manpower assessment programme.

Success in such a programme obviously depends upon the attitude of the men involved. Here a bad foundation had already been laid long before the Committee came into existence. Going back over the years, industrial relations at the North Sydney ferry terminal had been fairly good; but I do not think anyone would deny that many of the men viewed the management with some suspicion. To ask them suddenly to lie on a couch and spill their family secrets would obviously be asking for trouble. The situation had also been aggravated because the news about the proposed changes had been withheld longer than the men thought justified. It had been common knowledge during 1964 and early 1965 that the federal Department of Transport had been formulating plans, in consultation with C.N.R., for far-reaching changes at the ferry terminal and service; and it had been suspected that many men's jobs were in jeopardy. Rather naturally, agitation from the community and the union mounted to try to get the Department to spill the beans. The issue was taken up by local M.P.'s and, as they all belonged to the parliamentary opposition, the matter became caught up in politics. **Bad feeling grew.** Eventually, on July 4, 1965, the plans were announced by the federal government. A period of shock followed. The company at once tried to retrieve the situation by holding long and exhaustive meetings with union leaders and employees; but there was a long hill to climb back.

All this scarcely created a situation in which ready co-operation of the men could be taken for granted. It was in this setting that preparations were made by the company to survey the men likely to become redundant and obtain personal information from them. Had I been associated with the project at that time, I would have counselled extreme caution. However, perhaps due to the skill of the interviewers (who were from the staff of C.N.R. regional and head offices), the exercise was completed successfully without (as I would have feared) the interviewers being tossed into the harbour. The men were wary, particularly at the beginning, but they co-operated and all but a handful presented themselves for interview.

The exercise was carried out in a hurry and its directors were not completely satisfied with the results they obtained. Some parts of the questionnaire sought information on attitudes and intentions and the

answers were, at least in my opinion, of doubtful value. However, a good deal of factual information was obtained relating to the men's ages, the last school grades they had completed and their previous occupations. The data were put onto punch cards and tabulations produced. These were useful as a starting point and told the Committee some of the basic characteristics of the men concerned. They showed, for instance, that ages went from under 20 to over 60, with a median of 35.6 years; and that scholastic achievement was rather lower than for the Nova Scotia population as a whole.

It was clear that more detailed assessment work would have to be done before very long. The need became pressing when the Committee started making plans for educational courses. Those men who had any desire to embark on courses to upgrade their general educational levels would have to be tested and assessed to ensure that classes would be fairly homogeneous. The advisability of having interviewers unconnected with the company was accepted and the Committee was determined to get the best persons available to undertake the work. It was fortunate to be able to obtain the services of two excellent men: one a private consultant with long experience of personnel selection and counselling, the other with senior experience with the Toronto Board of Education in the selection and counselling of adults for training.

Once again the exercise started slowly. The men were hesitant about this psychological-probing idea and a notice inviting those interested in training to come in for testing produced almost no response. Indeed, there were some signs of collective opposition. However, after a personal letter to men at their homes and union officers had led the way by submitting to the test themselves, the trickle started. The interviewers very quickly gained the confidence of the men and the trickle became a flood. The enthusiasm was quite remarkable. After about four weeks' work, all those men expressing interest in upgrading their educational levels (some three hundred of them) had been tested and wherever possible, allocated to future courses.

The most pressing manpower assessment programme is therefore complete. However, more and probably much bigger programmes will have to be held when the Committee is ready to move into the field of vocational training.

Manpower Preparation

Manpower preparation in the present context implies a number of things. First, and most important, it means trying to get the men in the frame of mind in which they will be prepared to help themselves. The most imaginative facilities may be provided but they are all useless if the men do not choose to make use of them.

During the preliminary interviews already described, some attempt was made to jerk the men out of apathy, wherever the interviewers found it existed. In particular, they tried to convince the men that they had to stop relying on wishful thinking that something would turn up to prevent the redundancies materialising — a rather natural temptation when nothing was due to happen for two years or so.

This psychological preparation was continued by the two outside experts at the same time as they were engaged on testing for the educational programmes. They made literature on training, jobs and other parts of the country available.

Even after the two formal interview programmes were over, counselling was not forgotten. All the men have been told that the Manpower Co-ordinator, who is stationed full-time at the ferry terminal, is always available to give information and advice to anyone needing it. Even if something arises that he feels unable to handle, he can readily draw in someone else to help.

Secondly, manpower preparation implies improving the men's general level of education to fit them directly for new jobs or to equip them to embark on vocational training. To set such a programme going involved a process of drawing in all those who could help, and undertaking something like a scavenger hunt to get together the physical requisites. The first big step forward was when the Town Council kindly made available the upper storey of the former town hall, redecorating the three excellent rooms it contained under the Winter Works Programme.

Instructors proved a big problem since their calibre would determine the quality of the courses. There followed a detective-type hunt in which leads offered by educators and industrial firms were followed up one after another. This was not the best time of the year to try to

engage instructors, but success eventually came with the appointment of two excellent men — one as Instructor and the other as Instructor/Administrator. The latter will only be available for a few months but another appointment has already been made of another very good man to succeed him.

The courses will include English, mathematics and science — initially at the Nova Scotia grade 8 level. Later, courses will be offered to permit anyone to reach at least grade 7 and those with the ability to go to grade 10. The curriculum will be the one used throughout Nova Scotia for part-time adult studies. Students reaching the required standards will receive a certificate from the local school board confirming that they have attained the equivalent of the usual Nova Scotia level in the subjects taken.

A careful examination of textbooks was made and expert advice sought. As a result, a range of what appear to be the best books available has been chosen and supplied to students. Other supplies such as scribblers and writing materials are being provided by the students themselves.

Another important and potentially difficult problem concerned the times when students would attend classes. The Committee agreed that to expect men to study as well as carry out their normal work would appreciably reduce their chances of success. It has been arranged therefore that each student will be released two hours before the end of his shift or turn in two hours after the beginning of his shift on the days he attends classes. As the courses are on a five days a week basis for about three months, and the number of men attending will rise from the thirty in the first courses to perhaps sixty or more, this could create head-aches in the manning of the work-gangs. At present, the number of men involved is small enough to make it possible, with a good deal of ingenious juggling, to carry on without bringing in many additional men to fill the gaps. But the touchy issue of gang-size is involved here and some more formal arrangement may have to be reached when the number of students grows. I have been most impressed with the way management and union have pulled together to make a working basis possible. They both know only too well the delicate nature of the situation. They are playing it skillfully in the honest belief that this training programme is good and should be made to work.

The students will attend three hours per day, spending about one-third of each spell on each of the three subjects. They are a group of thirty-two, carefully selected because it is appreciated that the success of future courses depends on their performance. They are mostly in their late teens or twenties, but a smattering of older men is included. Evening study on their own will, of course, be an essential part of their course and, to provide for those without suitable facilities at home, a room has been set aside in the educational centre where they may do their homework. Even those with good facilities at home will probably benefit from using the private study room — it allows them to cement their feeling of common purpose with their colleagues and to benefit from the help of the instructor who will always be in attendance.

The financial costs of the first course will be borne largely by the federal and Nova Scotia governments under Programme 4 of their agreement. The federal government will meet 75% of the direct costs of the courses while the remaining 25% will be covered by the provincial government. The company will contribute by meeting some of the indirect administrative costs and paying any additional wages which arise from the men's attendance. For subsequent courses, when many of the men attending classes will have to be replaced on the job in order to keep the work moving, an arrangement which is believed to be novel in Canada has been approved. For each three-hour spell at class, one hour will be the man's own time, one hour will be paid in wages by the company and the last hour will be covered jointly by the federal and provincial governments as an allowance equivalent to one normal hour's wages.

The co-operation received from every level of public authority in setting up these courses was really splendid. School principals and officials of governments at all levels went out of their ways and often devoted much of their private time to getting the scheme moving. This vindicates the general approach discussed earlier of involving and seeking the advice and help of all those with expert knowledge and in strategic positions in governmental service. It is amazing how very willing most people are to lend a hand so long as they are approached in the right way at the right time.

While relief and enthusiasm are in order, now that the first training scheme has been launched, it is right to remember that this is all just the beginning. It is directed primarily at bringing the men up to the

levels required for entry to vocational courses. Vocational training will be a separate and big project. Men will have to be tested for aptitude and counselled in respect of the best courses to follow in the light of their particular abilities, interests and family circumstances. Not much can be started just at the moment because facilities for training are not yet available locally. But, by the beginning of 1967, the provincial government will have completed its extension programme at the Point Edward Adult Training Centre and the training can then start.

It is expected that governmental aid will be available under Programme 5 to help the men attending the courses, but our initial examination of the present regulations leads us to believe that some adjustment in them will be desirable if the optimum results are to be achieved. Preliminary discussions have already been held to explore the possibilities.

The present programme of potentially-redundant men, some middle-aged, embarking on a retraining scheme to equip themselves to transfer to fresh jobs provides much that is of interest from a policy and theoretical point of view. The Committee is considering how best the situation might be studied to provide information upon learning processes which might be of benefit in future cases.

Manpower Transfer

All the preparations already described will come to nought if the obstacles to transfer from one job to another prove insurmountable. As previously mentioned, of the few men who have left North Sydney to take up other jobs most have returned in a discouragingly short time.

One of the reasons is lack of pressure to make a go of the new job. Almost everyone who leaves home to take up a strange job in an unfamiliar location is miserable for the first week or two; but if there is nothing else available, he puts up with it and eventually settles down. In the case of the North Sydney men, however, they know that they can return and it is natural to yield to the urge to do so. This position is indirectly made worse because an understanding between the union and the company made specially for the present circumstances permits them to return and resume all their existing seniority privileges. This arrangement was, however, necessary — otherwise no one would have been prepared to take a chance.

Another reason is that many men are unconvinced that they are really going to be without a job in two or three years. Most people are basically optimistic and everyone knows that the best-made plans often have to be changed. Why then give up a familiar, relatively well-paid job in the district in which they feel they belong when there may never be any need to do so?

A probable third reason is that the men are unprepared for what they find after they move. They arrive in a strange place, usually bewilderingly big compared with North Sydney, and find themselves in unfamiliar living conditions and obliged to spend their days doing work they have never done before. Much might be done to prepare them psychologically for their new lives before they go and arrangements made to receive them to help them settle in. A start has been made in this direction and men transferring within the C.N.R. system are being met on arrival and helped. But the Committee feels that it needs to know a lot more about the problems of transfer and will have to make fairly elaborate steps to smooth the way.

As a start, the Committee has commissioned a special study of the frictions against manpower mobility, using the North Sydney situation as a case study; and it is making arrangements for a study of a group of Cape Bretoners who moved to Kingston. By about next October, it hopes to have some initial results which will help in formulating plans to meet the problems.

Some oil for the wheels already exists. The federal government has recently introduced a system of loans and grants to assist in the transfer of redundant persons. The scheme is however new and its precise implications and its relation to other government schemes previously existing are being investigated. And the C.N.R. already pays the moving costs of employees transferred within the company. No doubt the question of severance pay will eventually be raised, though members of the Committee are unanimous in their belief that this must not be used as a way of buying a way out of a problem.

Though the problems of arranging a smooth transfer of redundant men to other jobs and perhaps other districts are many and complex, there are reasons to believe they are not insurmountable. Wherever one goes in central and western Canada and many parts of the United States, one finds former Cape Bretoners — all apparently successful transplants.

Community Problems

While the major responsibility of the Committee is to the men directly involved, it nevertheless feels an obligation to give what help it can to the local community.

There is little doubt that the changes will cause a cool wind to blow through the district. The ferry terminal is the second largest employer of labour in the town and, if most of it has to leave to obtain work elsewhere, there is bound to be a considerable impact — even though the extra boats to be put on the ferry service will provide some new jobs and so help to offset the stevedore losses.

There is a limit to what the Committee can do to help. It has gone to some lengths to keep the community informed about what the plans and effects are likely to be. It has held discussions and suggested ways in which the town might improve its image and facilities so that new industries might be attracted in. And C.N.R. experts on industrial location have put their facilities at the disposal of the community.

Though financial limitations impose restrictions upon the lengths the community leaders may go, there are a few encouraging signs that there is a wakening interest in the problem and an eagerness to do some self-help, instead of relying on a governmental Big-Brother to move in and take over.

Bonds between the Committee and the community have also been strengthened by using the press to keep the local population informed of what the Committee is doing. And the town fathers and other leading citizens are invited to participate in any important ceremony, such as the opening of the new training centre.

Conclusion

My first reaction when asked to write this paper was that it was too early to say very much. At that time, the Committee had operated for only three months. However, some progress does seem to have been made. A lot has been learned about the extent of the problems involved, a good deal of manpower assessment has been done, plans are well advanced for research projects to enquire into employment opportunities, obstacles to mobility, and learning processes and the

first educational course is underway. Perhaps of even greater importance is that a fund of goodwill with outside persons and organizations has been accumulated and, most significant of all, the men involved seem to be developing a state of mind in which they are prepared to try to shape their own destinies.

The Committee is therefore fairly pleased with what has already been achieved. But the members are not deluding themselves into thinking that it is all over bar the shouting. Plenty of difficult problems lie ahead and the final assessment will have to be deferred for three or four years.

LICENCIEMENTS AU TERMINUS DE NORTH SYDNEY

Les méthodes utilisées pour manipuler la marchandise transportée par bateau entre North Sydney et Pointe-aux-Basques étaient lentes et désuètes. La situation fut étudiée par le Canadien National et le Département du Transport et on proposa une solution qui permettait de réduire le nombre d'employés requis de 800 réguliers et 200 temporaires à 100 employés réguliers en 1968. 900 personnes allaient donc être affectées par ce changement.

L'union internationale de débardeurs et le Canadien national s'unirent pour former un comité conjoint comprenant trois représentants chacun. Les recommandations du Comité devaient être soumises à la Compagnie et à l'Union pour étude et, si elles étaient approuvées, elles devaient être mises en application par un coordonnateur qui agissait comme secrétaire du Comité.

Le Comité devait étudier la possibilité de trouver de nouveaux emplois aux employés mis-à-pied. A cette fin, il devait:

- a) découvrir les capacités des hommes mis-à-pied;
- b) découvrir des sources d'emploi;
- c) entraîner les individus;
- d) éliminer les obstacles soulevés par le transfert.

Le Comité décida de faire le travail lui-même au lieu de le confier à des experts malgré les difficultés qu'une telle procédure pouvait engendrer. Mais il s'assura de la coopération d'autres personnes ou organismes, plus particulièrement les ministères provinciaux de l'Education et du Travail.

Le Comité étudia donc les conséquences du changement technologique qu'on voulait implanter, les opportunités d'emplois ainsi que les qualifications des personnes mises-à-pied. Puis il fallut trouver une façon de motiver les individus à

s'aider eux-mêmes et à se prévaloir des avantages qu'on mettait à leur disposition. Ceci se fit surtout au moyen d'entrevues conduites par deux spécialistes employés à cette fin.

L'étape suivante fut d'améliorer le niveau général d'instruction des hommes affectés par le changement. On se mit à la recherche d'instructeurs qualifiés et on mit en branle un premier programme de cours auquel un grand nombre d'individus et d'organismes collaborèrent activement.

Le problème principal auquel le Comité aura à faire face est le transfert de ces hommes mis-à-pied d'ici l'automne 1967. La plupart des obstacles au transfert sont d'ordre psychologique.

Le Comité a déjà fait entreprendre une étude sur les causes réduisant la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre à North Sydney et projette une étude semblable au sujet d'habitants du Cap Breton démenagés à Kingston.

Enfin, quoique la responsabilité première du Comité soit à l'égard des hommes affectés par le changement technologique, le Comité a aussi l'intention de faire tout en son pouvoir pour aider la communauté locale aussi affectée par le changement.