

Industrial Relations

principle and provide legislation in this field so that annual holidays with pay should be granted by the law of the land and that it has gone far enough to recognize that what is desirable is a holiday of two weeks in a year with pay, why it has seen fit to provide that an employee does not receive two weeks' holidays with pay in a year until he has been two full years in the employ of an employer.

We urge that when we get into committee on this bill and come to the appropriate clauses the minister give favourable consideration to the necessary amendments to change the bill in this one particular. We are happy to support the bill. We are glad to see this kind of legislation coming forward. We think there should be more like it. We think there should be a bill to provide for statutory holidays with pay, and one to provide for minimum wages and we hope there will be bills to provide for the other aspects of a proper and adequate national labour code.

When these other measures are brought in we hope there will not be any short changing of the Canadian workers as there is in this bill but that the government will do its best to meet what we believe are the reasonable demands placed before it in the memorandum presented to the government by the Canadian Labour Congress on October 21, 1957, and the requests that have been laid before it by other responsible labour bodies.

We shall be glad to support the bill but we hope the minister in committee will accept amendments to provide that the two weeks' annual holidays with pay shall commence after one year's service in line with a vote on that very proposal which the Conservatives registered in this house in 1956.

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the house that if the Minister of Labour speaks now he will close the debate.

Hon. Michael Starr (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, may I first of all thank the hon. members who have taken part in the discussion on second reading and for the comments that have been made in respect to the principle of this bill. Several of the hon. members who spoke on this bill expressed disappointment that it does not provide for two weeks' annual holidays with pay after one year's service. I wish to point out, however, that when the bill comes into effect the great majority of employees will be entitled to two weeks' vacation within the year following because the bill takes into consideration previous continuous employment. In other words, this bill is retroactive for two years.

The government gave this matter very serious consideration and the result is this

decision. Consequently, although I appreciate the suggestion that an amendment be considered at the committee stage, I must say at once that our decision was reached after extremely serious consideration and the result is as set out in the bill, one week's vacation after the first year and two weeks' vacation after the second year, retroactive for a period of two years.

Moreover, hon. members of this house must be aware that the prevailing holiday provision in the collective agreements covering the majority of employees in the federal and provincial field is two weeks' vacation with pay after three years' employment. Therefore, this bill provides a vacation standard which is substantially ahead of prevailing vacation standards established by collective bargaining. Hon. members in this house who advocate that we should impose a vacation provision giving entitlement to two weeks' paid vacation after one year are proposing in effect that we should impose a minimum vacation plan which in substance would be equivalent to the most advanced holiday plans now provided under collective bargaining agreements in Canadian industry. I do not consider that it would be wise or responsible legislation to impose such a provision as a minimum vacation standard at this time. This government has given the question serious consideration and we feel that in the proposal of this bill and in its submission to this house the government has taken a step that goes a long way in the provision of sound labour legislation.

We hope that in the future we shall have the opportunity to bring forth legislation such as that proposed and suggested a few moments ago by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

The hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Byrne) commented on the fact that the province of British Columbia legislation extends to everyone. I want to point out that the province of British Columbia legislation and that of the other provinces with regard to vacations with pay all provide for certain exemptions.

The hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre also commented on the fact that certain members of the present government, on a previous occasion when they were in the opposition, voted in favour of a bill containing a better provision than does the present one, namely the bill that was submitted this year, as it was in the past, by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, providing for two weeks' vacation after the first year of employment. My only comment is that at that time the vote was on the principle of vacations with pay, that it was