

*Canada Labour Code*

In rising to speak on this particular clause let me suggest it is incumbent upon members of parliament to examine the strike situation in Canada from time to time, and the reasons for strikes. Strikes have become very unpopular in the public's mind. Let me remind the House and the minister, although he may be aware of this, of a strike taking place today in Newfoundland at a place called Baie Verte, where asbestos workers of the Advocate mines, some 570 of them, have now been on strike for seven weeks. I can assure hon. members of the House that strike pay in Newfoundland is pretty darn low. I expect it is about \$30 per week for a man and his family attempting to survive. These workers are not on strike for more pay. They are not on strike for anything except a change in their working conditions.

Let me tell the minister about those working conditions. A study was carried out by Dr. Selikoff in respect of the conditions at the Advocate mines. He found that 31 per cent of the workers with 15 or more years' experience in these mines show abnormalities through X-ray, which lead to asbestosis; 15 per cent with 10 or more years' experience have abnormalities leading to asbestosis, and of the entire work force this works out to one of every ten workers with abnormalities caused from working in the Advocate mines. In spite of this we have a company and several governments which refuse to move in terms of improving the working conditions in these mines.

I know the public becomes frustrated from time to time when the airlines and other such companies go on strike, or when there is a strike among the building trades which delays construction, but I want to say that all members of parliament should be backing up this kind of strike, because such strikes can bring labour peace to Canada, particularly if they make members of parliament and our ministers aware of the fact that we must act to protect the workers who are dying every day all across this country as a direct result of the environmental conditions in which they are forced to work.

The asbestos mining situation is one of these cases, but the fluoride situation is another. Studies have been done in respect of the Kitimat company in British Columbia, and I am sure the minister is aware of this. Fluoride poisoning is a direct result of working in aluminum production.

It is time that every legislature in Canada adopted the provisions of this bill so that workers have the right to save their lives by removing themselves from a working place when working there is destroying their health. There are some amendments we might like to have seen incorporated in this bill to accomplish certain other things, but I repeat my original words that the minister is to be commended for a progressive move in the labour scene. I hope he will take the advice of my colleague, the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), about extending the jurisdiction of this measure. It may be that the minister may want to clarify this. I have not had a chance to examine the clause in detail. Perhaps I could get the minister's attention.

[Mr. Leggatt.]

**Mr. Munro (Hamilton East):** You have it.

**Mr. Leggatt:** Perhaps he can clarify for the House just what this provision means in terms of its exceptions, indicating whether in effect the atomic energy and uranium industry is exempted. I am not entirely sure about this, and perhaps the minister is in a position to clarify it. I hope he can also give the House some explanation of why workers in the transportation system, such as airlines, are not covered. It may be that they are covered under another bill, but I do not know.

I did not have an opportunity of following the bill through the committee, and I would appreciate the minister's response to those questions; what do the exemptions really mean, and what firms are covered under the Financial Administration Act, thereby being exempt from this legislation?

**Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who has just spoken, and the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), have referred to the uranium situation. There is now a bill on the Order Paper, of which the hon. member for Nickel Belt is aware, to amend the Atomic Energy Control Act. It has reference to Part IV of the labour code applying to the industry, but it does include, as we are all aware, the phrase "unless the board otherwise directs". I would anticipate that when that bill comes before the House, particularly in view of the comments by both hon. members of the NDP, there will be controversy about those qualifying words. I anticipate hopefully dealing constructively with the objections to those words when that particular bill is before the House.

**Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, I want to join with my colleagues in congratulating the minister for this step forward taken by this amendment, and in paying tribute to him for his efforts and the efforts of his department to bring safe working conditions to the Devco mines in the Cape Breton coal fields.

I was not a member of the committee, although I attended one of its sessions, and I have difficulty understanding why these health and safety committees are not mandatory. It has been my experience that when health and safety committees are not mandatory there is a tendency on the part of the owners or the companies to take them less than seriously.

We must remember that all federal labour legislation, although it applies only to a very small minority of workers in Canada, not to the total working force, is meant to be persuasive in provincial jurisdictions, but we cannot bank on that type of thing. Even if we do bank on it, if the federal government is not prepared to make this mandatory, it takes away from what is a real forward step in the safety and health fields as far as protection of workers is concerned. Traditionally—as the minister and all members of the House know—the owners of property, whether they be joint stock companies or multinational corporations, consider that the main objective of protecting working conditions is to make sure their property, and therefore, the productivity that comes out of the ownership of that property, are safeguarded.