

Supply—Labour

that a good deal of the information I have received came from people who are much more directly concerned in the day to day operations of the labour movement than I am.

There is to be a study on federal conciliation procedures in the railway industry to be undertaken by the Department of Labour itself. I do not want to be critical of the Department of Labour because I know it has some very excellent people, but one can hardly expect them to do a very objective study of the work of conciliation under their jurisdiction. We have found 75 or 80 academics to do other studies and surely we could have found an academic to do that study.

Then there is to be a study of the wage criteria in the public service. Why do a study on that subject when for the first time we have passed legislation which allows the salaries of public servants to be negotiated through collective bargaining? This study is to be undertaken by the Department of Finance. I suggest that the Department of Finance cannot be very objective. Its job is to try to reduce the financial burden of the federal government. How can we get an objective study from that department?

Here is a task force which was characterized by someone today as "a proxy royal commission", which it is said will take 18 months to complete its work but which I suggest will need much closer to 28 months, which is going to spend a couple of million dollars, and whose work in my opinion will be largely useless. I suggest to the minister and the government that they should take a look at such problems as the one on which Mr. Justice Freedman reported and then bring in legislation which can be discussed and enacted here without waiting for the task force to do a job which I do not think it will be able to do.

• (2:50 p.m.)

I want to deal with one more matter which the minister mentioned, namely, the Canada Labour (Standards) Code. The minister said many nice things about it today. It seems to me that if ever a political snow job was done in this country, if ever a cynical piece of legislation was proposed and enacted by any government, it is this piece of legislation. Let us look at it. If we exclude federal civil servants, 80 per cent of the employees in Canada who come under the jurisdiction of the federal government work on the railways. Through collective bargaining they were able long ago to have their wages brought up above the \$1.25 minimum which this code

[Mr. Orlikow.]

established. I will give the government this much credit. The passage of this code activated some of the provinces to the point where they increased the miserably low minimum wage rate under the provincial laws. To that extent there has been an improvement, but the minimum wage per hour provision certainly did not have much effect on the employees who come under federal jurisdiction. I do not intend to quote from the act but the act spells out that workers should not work more than five days a week and eight hours a day for a work week of 40 hours.

Let us look at some of the things the former minister of labour had to say in the speech he made on October 13, 1964. When speaking of that bill he said:

It is a notable event in the history of the labour department and in the evolution of labour legislation in Canada. In so far as the federal government is concerned, it breaks new ground because for the first time the federal parliament is being asked to enact standards in several important fields hitherto unoccupied—

Then at page 8999 he continued:

The standards we proposed for the code are a minimum wage rate of \$1.25 an hour, a standard eight hour day and 40-hour week, overtime hours—

And so on. I believe that bill was passed on March 31, 1965 and was proclaimed on July 1, 1965. Next week it will be two years since the bill was proclaimed. What do we find? We find that there is a provision in the act which seemed to most people, and I take to the government, to be very reasonable and understandable. We had spoken in terms of there being a transitional period and therefore the government was given the right to defer for 18 months the enforcement of the 40-hour week provision. Well, the deferment has not been for 18 months. The deferment has affected thousands of companies which employ tens of thousands of workers. That provision in the act, which I maintain is its only important provision, is a dead issue because the government is still studying the applications for deferment by the companies which are involved. They have been studying them for more than two years. Repeatedly we have asked the minister when the studies will be completed. I do not know whether it will be this year, next year or five or ten years from now. When the minister and the department finally make a decision, if they ever do, then the companies will get 18 months.

In respect of the applications for deferment I should like to quote from a table which the minister provided to us. It covers applications up to February 15, 1967. There may have