

*Supply—Labour*

a member. As some hon. members may know, the convention which I have in mind is convention 102 of the international labour organization, entitled "Convention concerning minimum standards of social security." It is a very interesting document, and I wish to thank the Department of Labour for furnishing me with a copy of it, and I am also grateful to the department for certain information they have given me concerning this convention. I received this information both by letter directly from the department and by means of a sessional paper which was tabled the other day by the Minister of Labour or his parliamentary assistant.

I am not going to take the time to tell the committee everything that is in this convention. Since it deals with the minimum standards of social security, obviously that is what it is about. It refers to nine branches of social security: medical care; sickness benefits; unemployment benefit; old age benefit; employment injury benefit; family benefit; maternity benefit; invalidity benefit; survivors' benefit.

My understanding in connection with this convention is that a member state which has ratified must, in order to support that ratification, meet the minimum standard in at least three of these branches set out in the convention itself, including one branch of three or four that are named in particular. It so happens that not only has Canada ratified this convention but Canada can claim to support that ratification by virtue of the fact that the federal government has programs which fall within three of these branches. And by the way, that assertion is made in sessional paper No. 73-A, which was tabled a few days ago, and to which I referred a moment ago.

It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that for an advanced country such as Canada just to get under the wire in this field of security is hardly good enough. We are a responsible member state of the international labour organization, and since we have agreed to a convention which sets out minimum standards in nine fields of social security, I hope the day is not far off when the federal government will be able to point out that we have met these standards in more than just the three fields.

The main reason I chose to refer to this ILO convention of minimum standards of social security is that something shocked me when I read this sessional paper No. 73-A which was tabled, as I say, just a few days ago. I had asked a number of questions about this convention, one of which was:

How did Canada vote on the adoption of the said conventions?

[Mr. Knowles.]

The answer was:

The Canadian government delegates voted for the convention. The Canadian worker delegate voted for the convention. The Canadian employer delegate voted against the convention.

As I said a moment ago, Mr. Chairman, it came as a shock to me to realize that when we had before the conference at Geneva last June a convention setting out such minimum standards as are contained in this document, the delegate representing the employers of Canada chose to vote against it. To complete the record, I find that the total vote was 123 in favour of the convention and 33 against it, and those are individual votes. Hon. members will realize that there are 60 member states in the international labour organization, and that each state has a government representative, an employer representative and an employee representative. In all cases these representatives vote individually, without being directed or influenced by the others. In other words the Canadian employer delegate is a free agent, as we would want him to be in an organization of that kind.

But when you add them all up and find that all the member governments that vote at all voted for the convention, and when you add up the rest of the figures and find that some employer delegates from other countries voted for it then, as I say, to me it was a shock to find that the Canadian employer delegate could not see his way clear to go along with the government and employee delegates and support the ratification of this document respecting minimum standards.

There are those in the house and in the country who complain—and it is their right if they wish to do so—because some of us seem always to be fighting the cause of the workers in this country. We are told that we are dividing the community. Mr. Chairman, this is what we are up against. This is what the workers of Canada are up against—when it is proposed at an international conference that there shall be established, as a guide to the nations of the world, a set of minimum standards of social security, and when every government there that votes at all votes for it, and when all the employee delegates vote for it, as well as the employer delegates from some other countries, yet the employer delegate from Canada votes against it.

I submit it is time for some more education among that group in this country, so they may come to realize the justice and validity of the claim of the workers, along with the farmers and all those who produce the wealth of this country, to their fair