

Mr. J. C. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Liberal party and my colleagues on this side of the house, to endorse 100 per cent this bill moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I wish to compliment the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre upon being the author of this bill and bringing it before the house today.

There has been considerable discussion as to what the practical application of the bill might be. I think it is considerable. I believe the idea expressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was that the bill would set an example or a starting precedent which would be followed by the provinces who have more jurisdiction in this field. If this is the feeling of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, then I trust his hopes may be realized.

It is really unfortunate that the federal government does not have more jurisdiction in this field. The historical background of this matter has been dealt with amply. It seems to me that there are two factors which, in my opinion, make this bill all the more attractive and necessary right now and I hope the passage of this bill will to some degree alleviate the situation. I refer to the fact that there are several areas of employment in which wages are really substandard. This probably results from a lack of union representation, because the peculiar features of the employment do not attract union representation.

The other factor which, in my opinion, makes it all the more necessary to have legislation such as this is that it appears there are so many new people arriving in this country who are unfamiliar with the country, that they lend themselves readily to being exploited by all manner of employers. This type of legislation, so far as setting an example is concerned, will contain rates and job practices which would help prevent this exploitation. An example comes readily to my mind and is contained in the Goldenberg report on labour management relations. This royal commission was established by the Ontario government to study the construction industry. I feel this is a good example because I think that this is the type of industry in which an example really has to be set by somebody. If it falls to this house to do so, then we should do it.

I think it would be apropos, Mr. Speaker, if I were to quote a few of the recommendations contained in the Goldenberg report. I am quoting from chapter 7:

Where the construction worker is not protected by a collective agreement or an effective industrial standards schedule, I find that such protection must be provided by a minimum wage. The facts show

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that both unskilled workers and tradesmen in the unorganized sectors in the industry are particularly vulnerable to competitive pressures on their hourly wage and working conditions which may and do lead to exploitation. Considering also the transient and seasonal nature of their employment, their earnings will in many cases be substandard, particularly under conditions such as those recently prevailing in residential building in metropolitan Toronto.

He goes on to state that the Ontario legislation has been ineffective, and then he says:

I find that conditions in sectors of the construction industry where collective agreements do not impose restraints call for a change of policy in Ontario in respect of this industry.

Mr. Goldenberg then goes on to call for minimum wage standards to be set in order to cure the alarming deficiency and the exploitation of labour in Canada. In my opinion, this is one of the principal things, in an indirect way, this bill will accomplish. I think it is deplorable what is happening in the construction trades in Canada. The conditions in the trade are almost medieval. I should like to quote again from the Goldenberg report to show that some steps should be taken, irrespective of the immediate tangible results. I am quoting from page 10, where he is talking about the construction industry in the Toronto area in 1960-61:

Against a background of illiteracy and quiet desperation, workers were being compelled to accept conditions—sometimes under threat of deportation—which were startlingly deplorable.

Wages began to fall. But no contractor could hope to compete with the individual who was arranging the emigration of his own work force from Italy, and then providing wages in the form of board and room.

The ten-hour day had become commonplace, and the six or seven day week was not unusual.

The hours of work and vacations with pay act... was observed in the breach, rather than in performance, and overtime premiums and vacation pay had apparently not yet been heard of by most employers.

The report goes on to cite the alarming conditions and exploitation of labour. I am aware of the situation in the Hamilton area, especially in the construction trades amongst the so-called new arrivals. I feel the time has arrived when it is urgent that such legislation as this be passed.

I should like to refer to a few of the things mentioned by the previous speaker on the Conservative side of the house. He talked about the possibility of the next Liberal government coming into office, and about the attributes of his own administration. I might point out that the Goldenberg report, which is an excellent one and contains many clear recommendations concerning minimum wages in the construction industry, which has had a history of exploitation so far as employees are concerned, has not been acted upon at all by the Conservative government which set up the royal commission.