

Adjournment Debate

● (1810)

The point the Hon. Member is making about the significance of the Battle of Dieppe is certainly well taken. It is especially meaningful to a Hamiltonian who continues to grieve the loss of 197 fellow citizens and the wounding of 78 others from the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry Regiment. On the other hand, it must be remembered that Canadian servicemen contributed very significantly to other battles, such as the D-Day invasion in which at least three times as many Canadian servicemen participated and incurred as many casualties as at Dieppe; the crossing of the Rhine, the Battle of the Falaise Gap, the battle for Caen, all in northwest Europe, and not to forget the Italian campaign in which many significant battles were fought.

When one looks at the wonderful record of Canadians in World War II, and also in World War I, such as the Battle of Vimy Ridge, where the Canadian Army suffered casualties in excess of 50,000 men, the whole question of what action should be given additional recognition becomes very complicated.

However, the matter was settled in 1951. Canada, Britain and all the other Commonwealth countries agreed that no further recognition would be made for action which had taken place during World War II.

CANADA LABOUR CODE—PROTECTION OF WORKERS' HEALTH—
INTRODUCTION OF AMENDING LEGISLATION. (B) TIMING OF
INTRODUCTION OF AMENDING LEGISLATION

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise at this time to again speak about an item which I have brought up in this House a number of times, most recently on June 16, 1983, three months ago. At that time I asked the former minister of labour when we would be getting legislation to protect the workers who come under federal jurisdiction. We were promised over three years ago that there would be changes to Part IV of the Canada Labour Code and that in those changes there would be more protection for workers who come under federal jurisdiction.

As one individual in this House of Commons, and I think I speak for many others, I am concerned that this Government has been in power for over three years now, that we have been told over and over again that we would be getting new legislation and yet we still have not had the legislation presented to this House. We have not even been given details by the Department as to what might be in the legislation.

In contrast to that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the House what the New Democratic Party has done. After the 1980 election we set up a special task force which went to all parts of this country. We made a report over a year ago called "Graveyard Shifts, or Life and Death at the Workplace". We made recommendations which I think the federal Government should be following, first, that all workplace jurisdiction which is covered by the federal level should come under the auspices of one department, not the 17 different departments and agencies which are now responsible for various aspects of occupational health and safety.

We also suggested that workers should have the right to know what is in their workplace in terms of chemicals and pollutants. They must know the dangers which exist in their workplace. They should also have a right to participate in the changes and improvements which should take place at the various work sites. Finally, of course, they should have a right to refuse work which is dangerous and threatening to their health.

I recognize, Mr. Speaker, coming from the mining industry, that work is always dangerous. But in some instances, some work is more dangerous. When that is the case I think the worker must know what the dangers are and be in a position to try and change that where it is possible to do so. When the danger persists, the workers must have the right to refuse to work in that particular circumstance without losing income or losing their employment altogether.

One of the aspects of the legislation we think must be presented to this House, and must be presented quickly, is that the federal Government must provide adequate testing to make sure we know what substances contain; the chemicals and the pollutants which are coming into the workplace on a daily basis. Right now these workers do not know what they are dealing with. They do not know what is in the paint, the tar or the chemicals in the workplace. They do not know what the harmful effects of those chemical pollutants might be. That is an area in which the federal Government can do testing. If you leave it to each of the Provinces, a Province like P.E.I. which may only have 10 or 20 people working in a certain industry, obviously that testing cannot take place. However, in the country as a whole, where there may be 2,000 or 3,000 people in a particular industry, the federal Government is in a better position to do some basic testing to provide for increased knowledge on the part of workers.

● (1815)

Those are the concerns I have, Mr. Speaker. I ask again that the Government proceed with this legislation as soon as possible and that we not be told again by the Minister or his representatives that we should pass the legislation as soon as possible even though we have yet to see it. Rather, the Government should work with the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party to provide legislation which will protect our workers' lives. I think that is a goal this House should set for itself, a non-partisan goal for Members of all three Parties.

Mr. Antonio Yanakis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. The Government hopes to introduce a Bill to amend the Canada Labour Code early in the next session of Parliament. Part IV of the Canada Labour Code addresses occupational safety in health and, in general, applies to employment and working conditions in industries, businesses and Crown agencies that are subject to the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada.