

tions. In my opinion, this is the most important aspect of the bill rather than leaving it to regulations. In my opinion, this is the most important aspect of the bill. Often we are bombarded with propaganda indicating that the number of days lost to strikes has a very grievous and serious effect on the Canadian Economy: Very little is said about the very grievous and serious blow to the Canadian economy caused by the number of days lost through accidents on the job, injuries, or lingering physical conditions because of ailments resulting from employment. Indeed the province of Ontario is wracked with such incidents.

There must be legislation providing workers with the right to exercise some control over the conditions under which and in which they work. It is one of the worker's rights to exert control over the health and safety conditions of his employment. It is one right which should not be taken away. A long time ago it was taken away by what became owners' rights. The owners determine the conditions under which the worker labours. I commend the minister for bringing an amendment to the federal Labour Code before the House which returns to the worker what was his right in the first place. I am referring to the right of a worker to refuse employment in conditions and under conditions which he considers to be injurious to his health and safety.

Instead of the health and safety committees being optional, I would have preferred those committees to be mandatory. The minister is well aware of that. I made that point time and time again in committee. If we indicate that workers ought to have control over their conditions of work, then it seems to me health and safety committees ought to be mandatory. An agreement could not be reached on that. Thus, we agreed to compromise, and we obtained a great deal of benefit for workers under federal jurisdiction. Now the conditions under which the health and safety committees will be conducted in the work place are clearly set out. It provides the workers with a right to certain information. At the present time it is denied to them. I am referring to such things as dust levels, radiation levels, or whatever. Now they would have the right to obtain such information in order to arrive at some decision vis-à-vis their continuing employment. This is extremely important.

I do not want to get carried away. I am a politician who has his feet firmly fixed on the ground, but some people would never accuse me of having them firmly affixed in cement. I realize this is not the nirvana for workers' control over the work place. As I look at part IV of the federal Labour Code, I notice in Section 80, subsection (2), that notwithstanding this legislation, nothing in the federal Labour Code which refers to the health and safety of employees will apply to employment in connection with the operation of ships, trains, aircraft, and those agencies of government which come under the Financial Administration Act. I recognize that shortcoming.

Even if this legislation is passed, there is a "notwithstanding clause" which indicates that it does not apply to ships, trains, and aircraft. What else is under federal jurisdiction? Of course an umbrella has been provided. In case anything has been missed, any other agency of government which comes under

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the Financial Administration Act has been added. Well, every federal government operation comes under that act. The Atomic Energy Control Board comes under the Financial Administration Act. That board sets the radiation levels under which Canadian workers work at Eldorado or the mines at Elliot Lake.

Also there is a provision which indicates that changes can be made by order in council. I hope the minister will receive the cooperation of his cabinet colleagues in that regard. I am anxious about health and safety. I hope the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) gives us the assurance he will work with his cabinet colleagues in order to get an order in council which would indicate that if it is good enough to have it on paper, let us make it apply to some workers for a change. I hope the minister provides some assurance that we will not have another paper tiger. There are enough paper tigers in Canada. We should start to give workers some control over their working conditions. Workers are starting to refuse to work because conditions are unsafe in this country.

● (1442)

Can you imagine that we have a Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) who was a great defender of the asbestos workers. Oh, boy, when he was young and single, and before coming to parliament, he was a great defender of the asbestos workers. He was a great one to condemn the asbestos companies for the kind of working conditions that existed in the province of Quebec. It has been ten years since he became the Prime Minister of this country, with all the power of that office and we now find we are getting amendments to the federal Labour Code. These amendments come along every ten years, and we now have one that is to provide some protection for the workers vis-à-vis health and safety conditions.

This provision immediately becomes emasculated, because in Part IV of the federal Labour Code it is stated that this cannot apply to workers on ships, trains, and in aircraft, or indeed any other agency of the government which comes under the Financial Administration Act. One would hope that those vocal advocates of labour and of the rights of workers to work in safe health conditions would, in fact, come forward with an order in council putting these workers under the aegis of this particular bill. I hope the minister can give us the assurance that this is the direction in which we are headed with this bill.

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a brief intercession at this point. Let me congratulate the minister on a very meaningful piece of legislation in terms of promoting labour peace in Canada. The key clause of the bill we are now dealing with may make a significant contribution, although perhaps not in the immediate future, as there are too many exceptions over which the minister does not have control, because of provincial jurisdictions. We should give the minister some credit for leading the way for provincial ministers of labour, who can now have a look at this proposal and make sure provincial labour codes contain the specific provisions of clause 29 which we are about to pass.