

*Supply*

change, and that the best way to ensure some improvement in maternity leave benefits, would be for a House order which would guarantee the legislation would come back to this House for final vote prior to the June recess?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault):** The Hon. Minister has one minute in which to answer the question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

[*English*]

**Mr. Wenman:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister was very selective in tabling his correspondence. Would he table all correspondence he has received recently that relates to opinions expressing either concern or support for the legislation? I am sure that would help all of us.

It is not a matter of whether the Bill will or will not be passed or what changes are made or may be suggested to it; the important decision to make is whether the Government is committed to providing time for debate in the House of Commons. If so, how many days can the Minister gain? How much time can the Minister gain from his House Leader in the House of Commons in order that the Bill get to committee? And when it gets to committee, is he looking to allow—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault):** Order, please. This puts an end to the period allotted for questions and comments. We are now resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes).

**Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, it is a shame the Minister did not have time to answer the question posed by the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman). Partly what we are engaged in today on an Opposition day is a debate about who is to blame. This Parliament has sat for well over four years now. For the first time, just recently we have seen some proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code. The Member from the New Democratic Party said he has been pushing for amendments to come forward for quite some time. I think that is probably true. Certainly the previous critic for the Conservative Party, the Hon. Member for Perth (Mr. Jarvis), has pushed for years for amendments. Given the kind of unanimity found in the Opposition Parties that amendments to the Canada Labour Code are necessary and desirable, that the health and safety of workers are at risk and need to be protected, it is very curious that we suddenly see a proposed set of amendments so close to a federal general election.

Sitting here and listening to the debate it is very clear, given the fairly long-standing lead of the Conservative Party in the Gallup poll, that both the Liberals and the New Democrats, the socialist alliance which we have faced year in and year out in this country, have got together in a fashion designed, hopefully for them to erode the popularity of the Conservative Party of Canada and to replace it with popularity for either the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party.

● (1250)

I wonder whether or not we are looking at these amendments in the month of June, 1984 from the right perspective. Normally when a piece of legislation is before the House, it is the obligation of Members of Parliament to vet it, to see that it gets to committee, to hold hearings and to decide whether or not it is worded as well as it can be, whether or not it deals with the real problem, whether or not it is designed to provide a real solution. That is the normal practice. However, standing here today I am wondering whether this legislation is being brought forward solely for the purpose of electoral gain. I am wondering whether or not there is any motivation lying behind the legislation which deals with the health and safety of workers, the concerns of women and the concern for technology.

Last week the New Democratic Party brought forward a motion which was very similar to the one we are debating today. The first two or three lines of it were identical, but the last two lines read "at the mercy of long-standing Conservative resistance to such improvements in labour legislation". In that motion they attempted to indicate that the Conservatives were against labour legislation to protect health and safety.

Not only is that false, it is particularly vicious. I do not know a single Member of the House of Commons of any political persuasion—an independent or a Party member—who is not concerned about the health and safety of working Canadians. Surely every Member of Parliament is concerned about that. Given that concern, why have we not had this legislation before us? Given the fact that it has been introduced in the House and has received first reading, why do we require an Opposition day urging the Government to bring it forward for consideration, movement to committee and passage? The only explanation I can come up with is that there are some political shenanigans at work here.

When I look at the behaviour of the New Democratic Party, I see that some of its members in high profile positions, such as the heads of major labour unions in the country, have written to the Minister urging him to pass this piece of legislation. I hear members of that Party urging its passage as well in the House of Commons. On the other hand there are secret meetings between House Leaders in which they are supposed to reach agreement. They are not reaching agreement. I see NDP members filibustering other pieces of legislation such as the one dealing with mortgage insurance. I wonder whether we have a little shell game going on. They say that we need the legislation and that they want it, but if we dig underneath their motivation, perhaps we find that it serves the interests of NDP members to go into the next federal general election without the passage of this Bill. They need to be able to put out brochures and to say in their speeches that in four years of Parliament we did not provide improved health and safety regulations in the Canada Labour Code, that we did not provide protection for women or deal with technological change in the Code. The two mainline Parties, in particular the Conservatives, do not care about such things.