

*Canada Labour Code*

of a man who worked all his life in a plant, fought the unions by working hard against certification, negotiations and strikes, then reached the point where he was on his death bed and requested his lawyer to draft his last will and testament. He asked for six union members to be pallbearers at his funeral. His lawyer said, "Why do you want them? You have been opposed to unions all your life." The man indicated that the lawyer was correct, but that every time the unions negotiated a contract, he reaped the benefits; every time the man had a problem, he went to the union and took advantage of it. He concluded by saying, "I do not see any reason why I should change that when I am dead".

The addition of the new clause relating to the dismissal of non-organized workers concerns the unions. While perhaps this is necessary because only a quarter of the workers in Canada are organized, it seems to me that assistance under the act should be provided to help organized labour in organizing the unorganized. This bill provides only minimum standards which are acceptable perhaps to the minority. In saying this, I suggest we are merely going through the motions rather than accomplishing anything, because in a small plant in which the federal government is involved and where there are unorganized workers, it is doubtful if they will be able to find a representative to act on their behalf in case of any dismissal, to ensure that the provisions of the Canada Labour Relations Act are observed. It might be better if the advantages of being organized were made clear to the workers because, despite what people say, an organized worker is a much more orderly and productive worker: and if management is reasonable in relation to the employees, it will find unions to be of advantage.

● (1722)

The minister made a major change in the bill by requiring the establishment of a safety and health committee. A few moments ago an hon. member mentioned the occurrence of strikes in his area and said he was opposed to them, as I am sure all hon. members are. However, it is interesting to look at the last year for which we have figures in that respect. We find that in 1974, nine million days were lost through strikes and lockouts, and in that year 11.5 million days were lost through accidents.

It seems to me the minister has recognized that one of the major problems causing loss of production by employees is not strikes and lockouts, but sickness. Much of the sickness has not only been the result of lack of safety precautions, but because workers have not been involved in observing that safety precautions are applied in their places of work. We are plagued in this country by a large number of agencies involved in safety. We have special safety measures for ships, others for aircraft, others for miners and loggers. Many categories of safety measures are applied differently from one area to another.

It seems to me very important that we look at some of these safety factors. The hon. member for Parkdale (Mr. Haidasz) mentioned some of them. One area of danger in my area which requires safety precautions to be taken, and which scares the

[Mr. Peters.]

hell out of me, is asbestosis, which is the most dangerous disease that can occur because it appears to act like a time-bomb. You can be exposed one day, and 20 years later the effects might become evident. It may be limited exposure, but still the results will appear in 20 years time, which may mean total incapacity, sometimes followed shortly by death.

We have little understanding of asbestosis. I think some members from the province of Quebec should take a special interest in that disease, because I believe the standards which are observed in Ontario are being only partly enforced in some of the towns in Quebec where asbestos is being mined and where the asbestos dust content is even higher than in some Ontario mines.

The premier of Quebec has been very concerned about this problem, to the extent of thinking about nationalization of the industry, partly because of the damage that has been done over a long period of exposure to many people in that province. Although the same danger exists with other chemicals, this is particularly true of asbestos. When I was a miner working underground in hard rock mines, I was exposed to silicosis. Silicosis does not affect everyone in the same way. Some miners were affected, and others were less so, even though they all were exposed to it to the same degree.

I remember working with a young chap who was on a stope very close to me for quite some time. He was in the mine about 11 months, and developed 100 per cent silicosis. We were given an X-ray examination every year and his X-ray showed 100 per cent silicosis. He was very badly incapacitated and could not continue working. We insisted that many other union workers in the mine in which I worked have a regular silicosis examination, and with one or two exceptions no one was found to be suffering from silicosis to any degree.

These are odd diseases and they are not too well understood. In many cases, silicosis can be seen on the X-ray, and it does not get any worse unless you are further exposed or unless there is a complication. But with chemicals such as vinyl chloride, PPB, asbestos and many other chemicals which cause industrial diseases, a time factor is involved. There is a certain period of incubation during which there is no indication of the disease developing, and then it occurs, in many cases with a fatal result in a short period of time.

The minister has indicated that he wishes these committees to be set up in areas where there are unions which, jointly with management, would organize committees; but he has not said how often these committees would meet, what they are to do and how the decisions that they make will be implemented. It will be very difficult to set up a bona fide safety and health organization in plants where there are unorganized workers.

I suppose that those members of the House who are opposed to unions will continue to put forward the argument that union leadership dictates to management. Let me point out that unions also protect the worker, and if someone is nominated at a union meeting to the health and safety committee of the plant, there will be protection, in the course of his duties, against any decision that may be made by that committee. In the case of the unorganized worker, I can see no way in which