

Supply

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, earlier this day when I began my few comments, I mentioned that labour union leaders across the country and certainly members of labour unions that fall under the Canada Labour Code should watch the behaviour of the New Democratic Party. They indicate strong support for passage of the amendments to the Canada Labour Code Bill, but their behaviour is one of obstruction and delay.

You have to ask yourself whether it serves the interest of the New Democratic Party to deny members of labour across this country the right to health and safety which will be guaranteed by the passage of these amendments. Do we find a political filibuster for political purposes, for purposes of trying to win a few more seats in the next election? Do they really care about the health and safety of workers or do they just care about winning seats? Certainly the behaviour we witnessed in the last few minutes would lead one to the latter conclusion.

I began my after-lunch comments by indicating that the Hon. Member from Fraser Valley West, as part of his motion, condemned the Government for its failure to address the concerns of women in the workplace and for inadequately addressing the issue of technological change. I have before me one page of a study done by the European Management Forum, EMF, a research organization in Geneva, Switzerland, and I want to put a couple of figures on the record.

Their survey of some 22 nations indicated that when it comes to equality of opportunity for women in the workplace, Canada ranks thirteenth in the world. The number one nation is Norway and the number two nation is the United States in providing equality of opportunity in the workplace. I do not think it is good enough for a nation like Canada to rank thirteenth in the world when it comes to opportunity for women in our workplace.

The next question dealt with equal pay for work of equal value for men and women. Where did Canada fall in that criterion? Canada was nineteenth out of 22 nations surveyed, OECD nations, western industrialized nations. On the issue of equality of opportunity, it was thirteenth out of 22 and nineteenth out of 22 on the issue of equality of pay.

We have a Government and a lot of members of the Liberal Party of Canada who serve in this Chamber who believe that their record when it comes to women's issue is a good record. Those 1984 statistics tell us that in the last 18 or 19 years in which that Party has been the federal Government of this country our progress is abysmal. We are going backwards, not forwards, when it comes to equality of opportunity for women.

If we simply look at figures coming out of the Department as they relate to the issue of departmentally-funded training, we get some startling answers. The preliminary data for the 1983-84 budget year show that for critical trade skills training—the flagship of the federal Government of Canada and its commitment to training for the future—96 per cent of the funding went to males and 4 per cent went to females. In the preceding year on clerical training, you get the converse, 92.2 per cent of training dollars going to females and 7.8 per cent to males. It is the clerical jobs that are being replaced by the computer.

We in this nation are busy pouring money into training programs for occupations that are disappearing. We are putting that money in the hands of the women of this nation. In the meantime, we are trying to put some money into occupations of the future, the higher-paying, longer-range occupations. Ninety six per cent of that money is being spent on males and 4 per cent on females. No member of this Chamber should feel very good about that kind of record. We have not only created the problem of lack of equality of opportunity, but we are perpetuating the problem into the future through the spending patterns of the Liberal Government.

When the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley West moved his motion today to condemn the Government for its failure over a four-year period to protect the health and safety of workers, to provide equality of opportunity for women and to move on the issue of technology, what the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley West is asserting is fact. Over this four-year period of time, at the very least, the Government has failed in all of those three critical areas. When our standard of living has fallen from second to fourteenth, it is in large part because the Government did not believe in and was not willing to invest in people. Thus we are not creating the kind of wealth we need to take care of the disadvantaged in this country.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Normand Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the motion before the House today, a motion that ignores the very tangible efforts and progress of this Government in the field of occupational health and safety.

As the House is aware, the Bill tabled by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) on May 15 of this year, an Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Financial Administration Act, contains a number of major amendments that will affect the three parts of the Canada Labour Code, dealing with, occupational health and safety, labour standards and industrial relations.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadian workers which is the purpose of the legislation before the House, is a major concern of this Government. The present provisions of Part IV have been in existence since 1968. However, although provisions are effective where they apply, many workers, especially those employed in connection with the operation of aircraft, ships and trains, do not receive the full protection afforded by Part IV. The Bill tabled by the Minister on May 15 of this year corrects that situation.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the proposed amendments on occupational health and safety contained in Bill C-34 is to cope effectively with the challenge of a constantly evolving social and technical environment for Canadian workers and employers. The new legislation is the result of numerous and intensive consultation sessions with employers and workers. Indeed, it was not drafted on the spur of the moment.