

*Supply—Labour*

to produce as much wealth as possible at the lowest possible real cost.

In this year 1953 I think we must look back over the past decade and realize that conditions have changed greatly since about 1939 or 1940. During the period of accelerated employment during the war years and subsequent thereto we had a series of changes in working conditions and in methods of production which left many of our labour laws and regulations in the background. Conditions are now entirely different from what they were in those years. The work week has been shortened. The general composition of labour personnel has changed. It is my contention, Mr. Chairman, that there is now a great need for a revision of the labour laws of this country in order to bring them into conformity with current conditions and accepted practices.

The various labour organizations have been asking for some time for uniform labour relations legislation and administration throughout Canada. While this was possible during wartime, it is only possible now of course through co-operation with the provinces and voluntary adherence to a general principle. I hope the Department of Labour is working on some scheme whereby the provinces may be persuaded to bring their various labour acts into conformity with one over-all principle, so there may be real uniformity throughout the whole of this Dominion of Canada.

In this regard, too, it is interesting to notice the discussions that took place in this chamber earlier this session on various labour matters that have come up. Bill No. 2, which was sponsored by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, and the amendment to the Unemployment Insurance Act are cases in point. I should like to refer to the discussion which took place at the time Bill No. 2 was referred to the industrial relations committee, when it was decided to ask this committee to scrutinize the bill. The subsequent outcome was that the department took it under advisement. When it passed the committee and was discussed in the house the Leader of the Opposition made some remarks, and I should like to quote from them as they appear in the *Labour Gazette* of March. He said:

It will be recalled that on other occasions we have proposed that there should be a general review of this act.

He was dealing with the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act. I continue:

One of the questions that arise in regard to any single amendment of this kind is that the most desirable practice is to have a general examination of the whole act, because patching up the act

in one spot or another may not produce the desired results. In the end, as has happened on a number of other occasions, an unwieldy and sometimes incoherent act may result, and clauses introduced into the act by way of amendment from time to time may easily conflict with each other when they subsequently are interpreted by the courts or elsewhere, and they may in fact defeat the very spirit of the act itself. Often a few words introduced without regard to the whole act and the intention of the act have had the effect of defeating the very purpose for which the amendment was introduced.

So it was with a feeling of some satisfaction, Mr. Chairman, that the committee learned that this was precisely what the department had in mind, and that a start was already being made on an over-all examination of the act with a view to its revision.

I was pleased to notice that the minister made reference to the establishment of a women's bureau. As a matter of fact, prior to the time the estimates were put out I had a note in my file to bring up this matter of a women's bureau. It had been my intention to ask the minister to consider the establishment of such a bureau, because I thought the time had arrived when it was necessary to have some sort of not only supervision but planning in order to investigate various conditions of employment of women in Canada. I notice that the appropriation which has been placed in the estimates is a small one. That is wise because you cannot simply establish a large bureau overnight. It will grow, and it is just as well that it should grow carefully and not become an unwieldy and top-heavy department without regard for the plan which it has to follow. It is a recognition of the fact that there is an increasing number of women in the labour force of Canada.

As we look back to the first war, 1914 to 1918, we recall that prior to that time the women's labour force was very small. They came out in great numbers during the first war, and took their places in industrial plants and in other fields of activity. Then after the war they slackened off a bit, although the over-all number rose steadily over the years, partly I think because they had learned the habit of working outside of their homes during the period of that first war. Then, as the labour force gradually increased, more and more women found that it was not only desirable for their own sakes but also for the sake of the nation that they should employ their services in industrial and other pursuits. After a while we had a second world war, and starting with 1939 the women flocked into the plants of this nation and did work which had previously been considered unsuitable for women workers.