

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie)—Proposed trans-Alaska pipeline system—expression of Canadian opposition—participation by British Columbia in meeting with United States officials; the hon. member for Portneuf (Mr. Godin)—Public Service—Department of National Health and Welfare—officers in Toronto reportedly receiving higher salaries than those in Quebec City; and the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall)—National Parks—Ship Harbour—prevention of land speculation.

Mr. Bell: Mr. Speaker, since it is one of our private members' motions which would be affected by the shortened hour, may I take the initiative and suggest we call it six o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement to the suggestion of the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster that I call it six o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CANADA LABOUR (STANDARDS) CODE

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING HOURS OF WORK, WAGES, VACATIONS, TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT, ETC.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-288, to amend the Canada Labour (Standards) Code, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, a little later in the session I will be bringing in, I hope, changes to the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act which have been awaited for some considerable time by members of the House who are interested in the problems of labour, and by organized labour itself. I think, however, we tend to forget that in Canada only about 40 per cent of the work force may be considered to be organized, that is, represented by trade unions at the bargaining table, and about 50 per cent in the federal field due primarily to the fact that public servants in general are entitled to collective bargaining.

Canada Labour (Standards) Code

When we do bring forward the bill on the IRDI Act later in the session I think we will have indicated, despite the criticism that all too frequently is raised in respect of collective bargaining these days, that we do believe this Canadian system bears perhaps strengthening but certainly warrants preserving. I think it goes without saying that in a civilized system the responsibility of government does not end with providing the legal framework within which organized labour and management bargain to establish their norms. I believe it is the responsibility of the government to protect the unorganized in this country who, as I mentioned, represent the greater percentage of the work force. I refer to people who are not covered by collective agreements and depend, therefore, on the federal government and provincial governments to varying degrees to provide the standards or minimums which govern their very existence in the work force.

I think we should remind ourselves that minimum labour standards are designed to ensure that all workers, whether organized or not, who are employed by small businesses or large corporations are entitled to specific conditions of employment which conform to socially acceptable norms. These are designed to establish a legal barrier below which these conditions cannot be driven by the unfettered play of market forces.

At a time when those who plan the future shape of our system of social security are searching for comprehensive solutions to the problems of poverty, including those faced by the working poor, this barrier represented by minimum standards is being increasingly recognized as an important instrument of social policy. It is so recognized by the government of Canada and will be used accordingly.

Again let me remind the House, although I believe most members know this, that the first Labour (Standards) Code was brought into existence in the federal field in 1965. I do not think anyone would mind if I were to pay tribute to the present government House leader, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), who piloted through the House the first Labour (Standards) Code in 1965. I believe those of us who are preoccupied with portfolios which address themselves primarily to people will recognize that this original piece of legislation has made a valuable contribution to Canadian development, and I hope these amendments will make it an even more valuable piece of legislation.

As members may recall, the 1965 code covered certain basic standards governing hours of work, overtime pay, vacations with pay and general holidays. The minimum wage at the time was \$1.25. The standard hours of work were set at eight per day and 40 per week with a maximum of 48 per week. The minimum rate for overtime beyond standard hours was set at time and one half, the minimum paid vacation at two weeks and the minimum number of paid general holidays at eight per year.

• (8:10 p.m.)

In the present bill we are introducing amendments that relate to all the standards which I have just enumerated. These amendments are based on the experience over the last five years and they are intended, for the most part,