

Department of Labour Act

we had a powerful political force behind these positive suggestions from the labour people.

The farmers of Canada have been a little more successful in dealing with governments over the last 50 or 60 years. They have organized their political weight behind some things that were good for their industry and governments have been pretty good at coming along and meeting those needs under pressure. We have never had that type of pressure on growth from the labour side. All we have done for labour is to set up machinery to settle disputes between labour and management and we are now given statistics.

Now we have before us a clause which has been there for 50 or 60 years, according to the minister, which says that they shall institute and conduct inquiries into important industrial questions. Maybe they have diagnosed that industrial questions do not include getting more jobs. But we really need some federal department to use its political clout, such as the Department of Agriculture, to get things done. We will certainly not get action from this group of faceless ministers who do not want to interfere with one another. They are all too frightened to move. They are too fat to fight and too frightened to run.

That is the situation. There is an opportunity here which would make labour a powerful force in this House if it spoke through its minister and threw its weight behind the industrial side, giving it a good chance for more jobs in Canada, not only because we want jobs in Canada but because we can do things cheaper and better. The consumers of the whole world would benefit because they would be able to get more of what they want at a cheaper price.

We have demonstrated this type of success through the steel industry. Canada has led the world in the last 20 years in the production of steel. This can be measured by the wages paid, the quality of production and the final cost. Our cost to produce steel is \$100 a tonne cheaper than in the United States. Canada produces steel cheaper than Taiwan, Japan, Western Europe, Singapore and Australia.

We have this great ability to produce better quality goods, to pay higher wages and to do things cheaper than any other country in the world. But we are not doing anything to encourage it. It is an industrial question that labour could take a hand in. It is said as a rule that you cannot sell because things are too costly. That is not true with many of the items we can produce in Canada.

I shall cite another example which is a little more current. The civil servants of the federal government and the civil servants working for the government of Ontario embarked upon an imaginative project some ten years ago to get at this problem of the rising consumption of water, which is the greatest threat to the southern part of Ontario today. They produced technology that would have reduced the consumption of water for domestic purposes by at least 50 per cent and, if they wanted to go the whole road, up to 90 per cent. When that project was nearing successful completion, suddenly the orders came down from Ottawa and that department was squelched and not allowed to go forward with the work it was

doing. What I am talking about is no secret. It is the CanWell project.

● (1440)

CanWell was a co-operative venture between what was then Central Mortgage and Housing, research people from the National Research Council and the Ontario Research Foundation. When I asked the minister in charge in Ottawa some eight or nine years ago why he would not tell the people of Canada about the CanWell project, his answer in this House, as the record will show, was "You tell them, not me".

The minister was in effect telling me that he had been told by his staff please not to mention CanWell because it was a success. All the hard work and imagination of the scientists and civil servants who built that success and all of that technology should have been patented. Something that is needed all over the world, is recycling and purification of water, and done in such a way that it is cheaper than what they are doing.

The great cities of southwestern Ontario are now desperately short of water. The city of Winnipeg needs more water. All these cities would not be facing billion dollar projects if the knowledge produced by our civil servants and scientists of ten years ago had been made use of.

More recently we have the example of Telidon. Tremendous know-how from the Canadian side went into the production of this technology, but I gather we do not have any patents on it. If a labour group could throw its weight behind the inquiries that are allowed here, once they showed what the facts were, put political pressure on to the city MPs and made them back up their labour people like the farmers put pressure on the rural MPs, there would be some action taken.

This is not a partisan suggestion, as I think the minister recognizes. I am simply saying this has been a failure. I did not know the "shall" provision was in the old legislation. Had I known, I would have been after my colleague when I was a minister to get his body in action and to get moving because I needed support and help. I was the one who was trying to take the lead in co-ordinating the work to develop these industrial strategies with some success, but not enough. I suggest the minister has a great opportunity, if he lives up to the word "shall" and makes his department produce inquiries about real questions that exist.

I have a list a page long of other proposals. I will take another example that is purely labour. Even though it is under provincial jurisdiction, it is the type of thing we have to face up to in politics. A company in Saskatchewan that produced binder twine worked eight hours a day five days a week. The demand for binder twine was so great that they proposed developing the plant into a three-shift-a-day, seven-day operation and thereby produce four times as much binder twine. Why did it not happen? The union which was recognized as the bargaining unit, the retail clerks union, said that under their union you can only work five days a week one shift. They refused to work the three shifts and, of course, refused to allow in any other union to do so.