

*Labour Conditions*

of the Sirois report which, as hon. members will know, was made shortly before the last war. The problem of course was temporarily removed by reason of what happened during the last war, and the fact that federal jurisdiction was expanded. However, we are back again in a situation where we do not have reasonably uniform standards. I point out what was said by Professor Grauer in a brochure he prepared on labour legislation for the Sirois commission. He said:

First, there is a marked lack of uniformity in legislation as between the provinces.

He then went on to deal, and I shall not quote him in detail, with the failure to implement international conventions. This was mentioned in the house a day or two ago. Then he dealt with the fact there is no adequate technique worked out for co-operation in bringing about more uniform standards of labour legislation. Then, Mr. Speaker, he went on to say this:

The lack of uniformity of labour legislation as between provinces has serious implications for internal policy. In the first place, it has to some extent encouraged competitive bidding between provinces for industries at the expense of labour standards. Where industries with poor standards have been encouraged, sore spots in labour relations and social conditions have been created. Once established, these sore spots are very difficult to get rid of.

The hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Munro) spoke about poverty in this country, and it is in these sore spots to which he referred.

**Mr. Nielsen:** The Minister of Finance says there are none.

**Mr. Brewin:** I do not happen to agree with him. This article goes on to say:

In addition, as long as competitive bidding for industry is allowed by labour legislation, there will be bad feeling among workers and bad feeling between provinces. In the second place, lack of uniformity in labour legislation is in itself a condition that prevents adequate and more uniform standards being set.

It creates difficulties in the way of enforcement and leaves the way open for undesirable economic and financial results, because they encourage or allow industries with poor standards. Now, in order to deal with this problem, Professor Grauer referred to various remedies, one of which I do not think we would accept now. I refer to his suggestion to turn over to the dominion parliament jurisdiction in the whole field. Another method he suggested was concurrent powers, with the dominion being granted the right to implement international

conventions and so set minimum standards while the provinces retained residual powers with a right to enact higher standards. The third one he suggested was to leave the jurisdiction as at present and work out some mechanism for consultation and action in setting standards.

His recommendations were adopted by the full commission, which ended this chapter of its report dealing with labour legislation as follows:

In order to protect the principle of freedom of trade between provinces and to facilitate the handling of relief for employables by the dominion, the dominion parliament should have jurisdiction to establish basic minimum wages and maximum hours of labour, and to fix the age of employment, leaving to any province jurisdiction to raise minimum wages, lower hours of labour, or raise the age of employment if it so desires. But, as noted previously, the powers of parliament should be precisely defined in order to protect the autonomy of the provinces.

The minister may well say that this is a matter to be taken up perhaps with his colleague the Minister of Justice (Mr. Favreau) when constitutional issues are being discussed. However, I suggest we will not have satisfactory conditions within Canada as a whole until we accept the principle that, at least in basic industries in which employers and trade unions are national in scope, these standards shall be national in scope as well. Whether this can be done by delegation from the provinces to the federal government, whether by constitutional amendment, whether by closer working together of the provinces, it seems to me that is urgently needed.

Just a few days ago the *Ottawa Journal* produced a list of the existing provincial minimum wage rates. They make talk of a uniform standard of living in Canada rather ridiculous. In British Columbia the rate is \$1 per hour. Of course in each of these cases there are certain exceptions. In Alberta, it is \$34 per week for centres of 5,000 population or over and \$30 per week for centres under 5,000 population. In Saskatchewan it is \$36.50 per week for ten cities. In Manitoba, it is 75 cents an hour in the cities and 70 cents an hour elsewhere. Ontario started with \$1 per hour in industrial areas and is moving toward making that general. In the Montreal area of Quebec it is 70 cents an hour and elsewhere 64 cents an hour. The notation for Prince Edward Island is \$1 per hour for men, and then there is a note which I do not understand, "less 80 cents in the food processing plants". If this is correct it would give food processing plants a very