

Canada Labour Code

size of the ship. I believe that the current law requires 20 employees for a committee situation. It would depend on the situation, the size and so on.

I must say that I am pleased with the agreement that has been reached. It will be beneficial with regard to the jurisdictional problem of uranium miners. This Bill will dovetail in with that and make it possible to implement that kind of agreement. We hope to see that agreement reached during the next week.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I have two points which I would like to raise. Having been raised in a coal mining area, I believe I have a fairly good background with respect to safety and health committees. I am glad to see that the Bill provides for them. The only thing which bothers me is the fact that only half of the safety committee is made up of employees. The employees are the ones who take the brunt, and the employer is the one who pays.

Many coal mine operators realize that every accident which is prevented saves them a great deal of money. At one time mining was the most hazardous industry. I know of a mine operator who offered three \$100 prizes for those employees who did not have an accident. They placed the names in a hat and the \$100 prizes were given to some very needy families. This was an incentive. Through the safety committees and that incentive, accidents in the coal mine were cut by more than half. Those safety committees were composed of employee, along with the fire boss who was the representative for the employer.

One other example which indicates that an incentive will work is that of an international trucking firm which is located in Calgary. It realized that every accident which was prevented saved the company money. At the end of the year, all those who did not have an accident would receive an expensive jacket. As well, the company provided a banquet to honour those who had not had accidents. The safety record of that firm is still outstanding. The incentive was there. People went the extra mile not to have an accident.

In this Bill there does not appear to be any particular incentive. One could say that the incentive is that employees will not be injured. But if there is another incentive which could be provided in the Bill along with the safety committees, I think it would help to reduce accidents and to prevent accidents. That is really what we are trying to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Are there any further questions or comments? For continuing debate, the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, when the Parliamentary Secretary was addressing himself to Bill C-34, an Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Financial Administration Act, he said that this particular piece of legislation had been in the works for the past year.

Mr. Foster: For several years.

Miss MacDonald: He says now that he said several years, but I think he did say for the past year. I would like to point out to him that there have been a number of us who have been urging the Government for a much longer period of time to bring forward this important piece of legislation. In fact, when looking through committee records and debate in the House, I saw questions that were raised with the Government on this issue. I came across a committee report from May 21, 1981, which was over three years ago. At that time, in committee the Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley) asked the then Minister of Labour, who is now the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Regan), when members of the committee could expect amendments to the Canada Labour Code to be brought forward. For the information of the Parliamentary Secretary, I would like to read the response of the then Minister of Labour. With respect to the review of the Canada Labour Code, he said:

This review, which in my opinion has been painstaking and comprehensive, will shortly emerge as a package of amendments to the code and will substantially involve employment safety, conditions of employment, improving matters of specific concern to women and minority groups, and dispute settlement.

He went on to say:

At this particular stage, I would seek the indulgence of the Hon. Members if I do not go into the exact details of the package. The appropriate place for this . . . will be its introduction in the House which I hope will be in the near future.

That was in May of 1981. He asked the indulgence of Members to await the introduction into the House in the near future of the details of the amendments. He must feel that the indulgence, patience and forbearance of Members can be stretched to the ultimate limit. That is what the Government has done in the past three years with regard to amendments to the Canada Labour Code. It has delayed them in the face of questions, urgings and pleadings which have been raised by members of the Official Opposition over and over again.

The result is that we have before us, in the dying days of Parliament, a very complex set of amendments to the Canada Labour Code. These are amendments which are of great interest to labour organizations, business firms, women's groups and people who want to examine them in detail. I think I can say at the outset that this is the major criticism which we have with this particular piece of legislation. It has been delayed so long that it allows so little time for substantial examination, study and improvement in committee.

● (1250)

Improvements do have to be made to this legislation, Mr. Speaker. There is no question about that. We have stated that, as we did the other day when we introduced an Opposition day debate so that we could urge the Government to bring this legislation forward. We are concerned about it. We want to see it get into committee. We want to see it passed. However, we also want to see it improved.

This Bill does go some way toward improving the rules and regulations which govern work standards and occupational health and safety as well as the general framework of labour relations for industries under federal jurisdiction, such as transportation, communications and banking. It also includes