

right of an employee to contribute to a pension, health, or disability pension fund is a sacred entitlement. The Labour Code sees it that way but, unfortunately, because of a loophole in the Code, certain employers have been able to circumvent the law and escape their responsibility to contribute the employer's share to a pension fund when, for example, an employee is rightfully on sick leave or maternity leave. Bill C-97 will close this loophole, which we believe is the right thing to do.

[Translation]

The Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) had already told me about his intention to introduce Bill C-97 to fill some of the gaps in the existing Labour Code. All employees contributing to a pension fund, a fund which protects them in case of illness or disability, expect to be able to continue their contributions and especially see that the employer as well makes his contributions to these funds when the employee is off because of illness or on leave to look after children, the most frequent occurrence being what is commonly called maternity leave. Unfortunately, clear though the intention of the Labour Code may be, it did have a loophole which made it possible for certain employers to evade their responsibilities. The measure under consideration is clearly intended to ensure that the employer will continue to pay his share of the contributions to these plans which protect the employees, provided of course the employee himself pays his contribution. Therefore we believe this measure will clarify certain sections of the Labour Code, and with that we agree.

This Bill reaffirms the spirit of the Labour Code and adds something that was missing in certain sections. This is why I do not intend to keep the floor much longer. I think the Bill is short but well drafted, a measure we were waiting for and which will certainly be welcomed by all working men and women throughout the country who contribute to various plans so as to be covered after retirement or in case of illness. To that extent we support this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and we hope it will go through all stages in the House of Commons as soon as possible.

● (1540)

[English]

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I rise to give our support for this legislation. On a number of occasions in the House I asked the Minister to bring this legislation forward. On those occasions, as well as in private conversations, the Minister indicated that he would move with speed. I want to congratulate him for that.

This is one time when we knew that the law contained an unintentional flaw when it was passed in 1984. It became apparent that some employers would use that loophole in order to deny benefits to people who are on maternity leave, child care leave or sick leave.

We welcome this legislation. Again, I congratulate the Minister for moving quickly in this matter.

Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co., Limited

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time, and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Paproski in the chair.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. House in Committee of the Whole on Bill C-97, an Act to amend the Canada Labour Code. Shall Clause 1 carry?

On Clause 1:

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Chairman, I have one question. When does the Minister intend to have this Bill proclaimed?

Mr. Cadieux: Mr. Chairman, hopefully as quickly as the Senate is prepared to look at the legislation. We should proceed as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Chairman: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed.

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ACT RESPECTING THE HUDSON BAY MINING AND SMELTING CO., LIMITED

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-98, an Act to amend an Act respecting the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co., Limited, be read the second time and, by unanimous consent, referred to Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House concerning the proposed amendments to the Act respecting the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Co., Limited.

These amendments concern a subject which, I am sure, is of great concern to all Hon. Members, namely, the health and safety of Canadian workers.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the importance of safety and health in the workplace cannot be stressed often enough. The statistics are