

Supply

[English]

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I listened with care to what the Minister had to say. He went on at great length to describe his concern about health in the workplace and to make sure that there would be no time lost through accidents. I think his phrase was that we would all be the richer if there was less time lost on account of accidents.

I have walked around Parliament Hill. The Department of Public Works is very busy doing construction work to make sure that these buildings are maintained. I have watched them working with diamond-tooth saws. They are breathing in clouds of pulverized stone and concrete and not one of them is wearing a mask. Has the Minister walked around the Hill to see how many of those workers are wearing hard hats?

If the Minister is so concerned about health in the workplace and time lost because of accidents, why do we not have the most minimal, even 1900 health standards enforced on the Hill for construction workers? If he is really concerned about workers in the workplace, why does he allow employees of the Government to breathe in those clouds of dust and become walking silicosis cases? If it is necessary to pass legislation to enforce this kind of minimum health standard, surely there is no heart left in the Government. I would ask the Minister to respond to that.

[Translation]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give my hon. friend a lecture on labour affairs, but I would at least hope that, as a Member of the Parliament of Canada, he should know who comes under the jurisdiction of the Canada Labour Code and who comes under the jurisdiction of the various provincial Departments of Labour. Construction workers come under provincial jurisdiction. In all Provinces, construction workers come under provincial jurisdiction except for the workers in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, who are covered by the Canada Labour Code.

I have taken note of the comments made by the Hon. Member. I shall immediately advise the provincial authorities in Ontario that there could be negligence on the work site right here on Parliament Hill to make sure that elementary precautions are taken. However, I want to inform the Hon. Member right now that these construction workers are not federal Government employees.

● (1240)

Mr. Roy: Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Minister (Mr. Ouellet) on this legislation which will amend the Canada Labour Code and Financial Administration Act, namely Bill C-34. These amendments concern pension, health and disability benefits and occupational safety and health standards. However, after reading the Bill carefully and listening to the Minister, I find there is one point on which I would have liked to hear his comments, although it may not be directly related to the Canada Labour Code. I am thinking of an instance where I received many representations from employees of a

transport company which had received a certain amount of money from the federal Government to ensure its survival. Unfortunately, employees who had been with the company for fifteen or twenty years received no protection whatsoever with respect to their salaries or pension plans, despite the federal subsidy.

I would like to ask the Minister, even if this falls under provincial jurisdiction, whether, when the federal Government agrees to provide subsidies, it could ensure that the employees concerned have some protection, not only for their salaries but their pension plans as well, and whether it could perhaps add an amendment to give them that protection under this legislation. When we see employees with twenty years of service who worked all their lives for a company, who have families and then overnight, the company goes bankrupt and shuts down . . . The employee is the big loser: he not only loses his salary, he also loses his pension plan. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we could look for ways, perhaps in consultation with the provinces, to make sure the employee loses neither his salary nor his pension plan.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that the whole issue of Government subsidies to the private sector should be examined, especially in the present situation, by all three social partners, that is, employers, unions and governments. Personally, I would like to see as one of the conditions for Government subsidies that a company would have the obligation to consult its employees and, if possible, obtain their support for improving, expanding and modernizing its facilities.

Very often if not always, subsidies granted companies have not been particularly welcome to workers who were then displaced by machines. The Government was supposed to be helping the company modernize its facilities, which often meant that a number of jobs would be lost.

I think I understand the Hon. Member, who would like to see greater social responsibility among companies that receive Government subsidies. I think that in future, we should strive for more direct involvement of employees in a process where the federal or provincial governments are helping companies with substantial funding to modernize their facilities or to get established in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister knows, I have asked him and his predecessors a number of times over the years when this legislation would finally be introduced into the House of Commons. I am glad to see it is here. I would like to see it passed and become law.

After hearing the official spokesman for the Conservative Party talk about long and lengthy debate and long and lengthy hearings, would the Minister not agree that the best way to ensure the passage of this legislation, that the best way to ensure those workers will gain the protection of a vastly improved Canada Labour Code, that the best way to make sure there is at least some minimal mention of technological