

Industrial Relations

take too much exception to some of the details which are offered in the measure, because on second reading we are asked to deal with one matter only, and that is whether or not we are prepared to endorse the purpose of the bill in which case the house, as on many other occasions, then passes the matter to a committee to consider all the details and to make any amendments which it might think necessary.

The whole purpose of the bill is that all in Canada who are subject to the legislation of this House of Commons in labour matters shall be paid a day's pay for each of eight statutory holidays a year and that those who are being asked by their employers to perform work on such days shall receive in addition to their regular pay which all employees receive, double pay for such work. As I pointed out earlier, this is now current practice in most of the better industrial enterprises which have agreements with unions in Canada. It would be specially applicable to federal civil servants. It does not include those workers who already have more favourable agreements with their employers than the details here would indicate. I feel that if New Year's day, Good Friday, Victoria day, July first, Dominion day, Labour day, Thanksgiving day, Remembrance day and Christmas day are worthy to be named as national holidays by the government of Canada, we should give serious consideration to enacting legislation which will enable as many Canadians as possible to take the day off and share the holiday with the rest of us.

(Translation):

Mr. Theogene Ricard (St. Hyacinthe-Bagot): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words with regard to Bill No. C-7 which has just been introduced by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Regier). First of all, I want to commend my hon. friend for his sincerely wanting our workers to benefit from paid holidays. Yet, I believe it is my duty to draw the attention of this house to some specific points.

In order completely to realize the extent of the legislation before us, we must, first of all, know the reason for which paid holidays have been introduced. At first, paid holidays were granted in order to assure the worker that he would suffer no loss of money because of a holiday coming up during the working week. That was the main reason for which that policy was agreed upon. It has never been the intention, when instituting that custom of paid holidays, that they should become bonuses.

For nearly a quarter of a century, I worked for a company where my duties were such that I served as a spokesman for the em-

[Mr. Regier.]

ployees in our dealings with the employer, and each time the matter of paid holidays was raised, it was in that spirit that we considered it.

The economic effect on a given industry of paid holidays should not be overlooked either. I agree that large industries could easily face their obligations and pay their employees who work on statutory holidays three times the regular salary. It is precisely what is being asked under this legislation, since we are being asked to add to regular salary a sum equal to twice the regular salary rate. As I said, large industries could very well face their obligations; however, we must also protect smaller industries. In fact, many small industries, of the family type, industries which are just beginning, would certainly be ruined if they were subjected to such legislation.

I therefore think, before approving such a measure, that we should necessarily give thorough consideration to all aspects of the matter, even to those which appear to be of secondary importance.

I said earlier that no one proposes to make bonus days out of leave days. A reasonable worker expects to receive good wages for a good day's work. As a rule he does not expect to receive money he has not earned. I think it is on the basis of that principle that the matter should be considered.

The proposal should also be considered with reference to provincial statutes. In some provinces, including Quebec, a provincial statute provides for seven or eight paid statutory holidays, I believe. I am not too sure about this but I think the number is at least seven. That is why I urge the house to make a thorough study of all aspects of this bill before they support it.

The hon. member who just spoke pointed out, and others before him have often mentioned, that the matter must be left for the labour unions to deal with. I agree with them because I believe that in certain circumstances in certain industries employees or their representatives, the labour unions, would be willing to accept only five or six paid holidays, in exchange for other privileges which would seem more important, not only for themselves, but also for those they represent.

Here again I must say that this measure must be examined in the light of all those facts.

Then there are the cases of emergency. It is recognized for example that union contracts provide that, under certain circumstances, double the regular pay shall be paid for work done on Sundays and statutory holidays. However, some categories of workers, such as guards, boiler tenders and others who by