

Private Members' Business

The Centre plays an important role in the lives of thousands of workers of Canada. Its mandate is far more than the promotion of health and safety in the workplace, though it is reasonable to assume that the physical and mental health of working people constitutes the major part of the centre's concerns and activities.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety also acts as a bridge between all levels of government, labour and management, particularly when standards must be established, maintained or up-graded in the areas of health and safety. Over the years, the centre has accumulated a wealth of information and statistics which it shares with any organization involved in the areas of occupational health and safety. In fact, any Canadian has access to information which he or she needs to ensure that they work in a safe environment.

The health of Canadians has been a major concern for the Liberals and, indeed, all Members of Parliament, but it was the Liberals who introduced many social programs and the universality of these programs to Canada.

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Safety at work, which guarantees health, is an extension of the medicare and health programs initiated by the Liberals. Much has been done by the centre, but the directors would be the first to agree that much still remains to be done.

Canada does not fare well on the international scene as far as occupational health and safety are concerned. In fact, we stand first among the five major industrial countries, including the United States, Great Britain, West Germany and Japan with regard to fatalities in construction, mining and quarrying. We are second for manufacturing and railway accidents. After heart disease and cancer, occupational death ranks third in the leading causes of mortality among Canadians. Such statistics warrant our attention and our continued vigilance.

The Minister of Labour stated in the House of Commons on April 28, 1989 that 894 Canadians died at work in 1987, and 25 million person-days were lost in that same year due to work accidents and occupational injuries or diseases. These accidents represent costs, direct and indirect, of \$17.5 billion a year, and that is almost the same amount that this government was trying

to borrow just last week on the borrowing bill. What a waste of health, productivity and time.

Statistics gathered by the centre tell us that 39 per cent of job injuries are due to illegal working conditions, and another 24 per cent is attributable to legal but unsafe conditions. The common denominator is consistently one of lack of information by both the employers and the employees.

Since the centre started operation 10 years ago, the work accident rate has gone from one worker in 8 to one worker in 10, which is a decrease of 17 per cent. Such progress did not just happen. It was the result of a concentrated effort by the centre to providing preventative information, by raising the level of consciousness, by establishing solid ties with all levels of government on this issue of occupational health and safety in Canada.

In 1988-89, the centre responded to 26,000 inquiries on its toll-free line, 54,000 new records were added in that same year to their electronic services, which consists of 50 data bases. This service was used by approximately 1,200 Canadian organizations which called on the system 40,000 times. A total of 350,000 publications on health and safety were distributed in the year 1988-89, and the involvement of the centre has been consistent, efficient and has improved under the guidance of a caring board of governors.

In their day-to-day work, the centre reports it has received total national and international co-operation, particularly with its American counterpart, the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. There has been a strong exchange of information and data bases, without charge, in the spirit of co-operation and mutual interest. It follows that the centre has attained an excellent reputation, both at home and abroad, for providing high quality information, a fact of which we should all be proud.

The primary recipients of the centre's work and activities have been, and should remain, Canadian workers and employers. This was an objective which this centre set for itself, and records show that 73 per cent of all inquiries have come from these two groups.

Much attention has been paid to health in recent years, with a great deal of it centring on prevention. Records have shown that where money has been spent on the prevention of accidents and disease, we have reaped immeasurable benefits. We have learned about better and more adequate nutrition, and we have successfully brought an awareness of accident prevention