

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, if this motion is voted upon we shall have to take a stand on the terms of the motion, and for that reason I should like to speak briefly upon it. I have not been able to consult with my colleagues regarding the matter, but if this is voted upon I shall support it because it is in line with the general criticisms of government policy which we have made throughout the session. Unlike the minister I am pleased to see a member representing a constituency in the province of Quebec raise these matters on going into ways and means. I do not think he need offer any apologies for the time that has been taken up in discussing the problems from his point of view.

During this session there have been few opportunities to debate matters of this description. Last week the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Hanson) made some caustic comments because I dared on behalf of this group to raise some questions connected with the war, and yet this afternoon we have had a prolonged debate on a matter of income tax which in my opinion should properly have been discussed under the resolutions now before us in committee.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker did not rule me out of order.

Mr. COLDWELL: My hon. friend says something about the Speaker having ruled in his favour. I would not criticize the Speaker's ruling, and I do not intend my remarks to be so construed, but I think it is a ruling to which the Speaker might give some further consideration. In any event we like to see members of the house who hold prominent positions observe the rules of the house, and I was amazed to hear the hon. gentleman violate one of the elementary rules which denies the right to a member to read communications criticizing something that was said on the floor of this house. That was certainly done this afternoon.

By bringing up this question the hon. member for Gaspé has raised in the minds of hon. members of the house the whole problem of the injustices from which certain classes of labour in this country are suffering at the present time. I know it is important that we do not have a price rise which will cause an inflationary movement. The people who would feel the effects of high prices would be those who have to work for their living, those who work in the factory and on the farm. But it seems to me that the discontent that exists is largely due to the fact that the basis of the wage and price freezing, if I may use that term, had no relation to anything else.

A period was taken and no attempt was made to relate one price or one wage to another price or wage level. Therefore we find ourselves in our present difficulties. A short time ago I was looking over comparable wage rates for the provinces of Ontario and Quebec and I found that even in war time the rates of wages paid in the province from which the hon. member who has moved this amendment comes are low when compared with the rates paid for comparable employment in comparable places in Ontario. A few years ago industries were invited to establish themselves in the province of Quebec on the ground that labour there was plentiful and cheap and, my colleague behind me suggests, unorganized. That I think is true and must be taken into account. In my opinion steps will have to be taken for the adoption sooner or later of a labour code for this country, with standard minimum wage rates for comparable types of work, in order to remove the discrepancies which now set labour in one province against labour in another province and cause discontent and unrest. I think the hon. member was thoroughly justified in bringing this matter before the house this afternoon.

Mr. SLAGHT: Would not a labour code have to be a provincial matter?

Mr. COLDWELL: Under the present constitution it is a provincial matter, but under the War Measures Act the dominion has the power to supersede provincial legislation. We would have the authority under that act, I take it, to do anything of that kind that we wished to do.

I do not propose to prolong the debate. I rose to say that if a vote is taken we shall support the amendment. The members of our group intend when the proper time comes, when the appropriate estimates are before the house, to discuss rates of wages and questions akin to those I have suggested this afternoon.

I am not saying anything at the moment about the income tax, because as time goes on, if we are given the opportunity and a few members of the house do not continue to monopolize the time by rising frequently to discuss income and other taxes, we shall have something to say about that matter.

Mr. JEAN-FRANÇOIS POULIOT (Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, just before this matter is decided one way or the other, may I remind the house that in the old days, in 1928, I was very much interested in making tabulations of salaries paid in the province of Quebec and in other parts of Canada. What I noticed at that time was that salaries and wages paid in the border cities of Ontario were higher than salaries and wages paid in other cities of