

Heritage Day

on the tracks. I wondered at the time what was the difference.

I made some inquiries about why trains do not move in this country on the prairies at least on weekends in the summertime, and I was advised that for one reason or another the railway companies are unable to make up crews to operate the trains on week ends in the summertime in western Canada. I am sure there are shift differentials and added pay for working on week ends, but it appears that employees of railroads like their week ends off and are not too concerned about working on week ends. If they will not work on week ends even for added pay, I think it would be a mistake to create a situation which would shorten the amount of time available for use by Canadians of their railway facilities. Of course that does not apply to Canada at large but is one of the added expenses. At this time when we are trying to cut down costs why we would be proceeding to do something which would add cost to our economy is just beyond my comprehension.

● (1610)

We have been told that we need to stabilize the situation, to work harder and produce more. We have been warned by the government that that will happen even if we do not want it to happen. The Prime Minister pointed out in pretty clear terms at Christmas time that Canadians could expect a great deal more government intervention and direction if they did not get hold of themselves and get things moving on their own. Yet here we are with a measure proposing another non working day.

As I pointed out before, a high rate of unemployment continues to plague us, and it does not matter which way the statistician serves up the figure, there is still an increasing number of people out of work this winter. I wonder how those people who are unable to work and want to work feel about our creating an enforced holiday for everyone. Upright and responsible Canadians who want to find work, restore a feeling of individual independence and self-respect, and perform a productive function within our work force are denied that opportunity. I am sure that when those people look at their dwindling savings and consider their future and the future of the families they are committed to feed, clothe and house, there is a feeling of deepening bitterness and resentment that their elected representatives should be wasting the time of the nation discussing holidays when our real function should be to come to grips responsibly with the problems and to do our utmost to fulfil the promises made during several election campaigns in the past.

We hear constant complaints from parents and others about the increased number of holidays granted in schools today. Most of us, I believe, sympathize with this view. After all, we in this House can hide behind the fact that that is a provincial responsibility. The issue of the creation of a new national holiday is one we cannot hide behind. It is a federal responsibility which we should look squarely in the eye and reject this proposal, even though it may not be a very popular decision with some elements within our society who are all too eager to jump at the chance of a day's pay for no work, which is what this boils down to in reality.

[Mr. Schumacher.]

We all know how the Liberal government talks out of both sides of its mouth from time to time, and I suggest it is doing it on this occasion. Of course it has the valiant support of its friends in the New Democratic Party. The Liberal government says work harder and produce more on the one hand, while on the other it is encouraging us to take another holiday.

The government spoke out of one side of its mouth with regard to wage and price controls in 1974 when it ridiculed this as an answer to our economic difficulties and won a campaign on the strength of this ridicule. Now wage and price controls are in effect, and that is just something from the other side of the Liberal mouth.

For the rest of us to follow this duplicity would be completely irresponsible and would constitute a betrayal of what we were sent here to do and what was vested in us by the constituents who elected us in the last election. They sent us here to try to restore some credibility in the government of the country.

How can we tell Canadians to cut back, tighten belts, work harder, bend their backs and produce much more, and yet at the same time create another holiday? The last time this issue came before us I stood against it, and I am standing against it now, notwithstanding some editorial criticism in one of Alberta's leading newspapers. I must say that on the other side of this question I received a great deal of correspondence and other messages from people who agree with the point of view I am putting forward, not just from my constituents but from people across the country. It is interesting to note that of the very few who did not agree with me one writer suggested I was advocating he slave away until midnight. I never suggested longer hours for anybody. I merely stated that we should not shorten the work cycle more than it is now.

I should like to give someone else a chance to participate in this debate, but it boils down to the fact that if the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan), who proposed this bill, has his way, we will have a holiday which is a movable feast. It would not commemorate any particular thing. There are two or three things suggested in the bill, and from then on it would be up to the cabinet to decide what we would commemorate each year. That bothers me, because if there is not one thing we are commemorating, what are we doing this for? If there is not one particular thing which is worth-while having an annual holiday for, then I suggest it is not worth-while, leaving aside all other considerations.

In summary, I cannot see any purpose for creating another non-working day in this country at this time.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, with my usual brevity I should like to say that I am highly enthusiastic about this bill, and I am always depressed that in these private members' hours we rarely get to motions and make decisions. I hope this House will make a decision and support this measure. In my long years here I have noted that far too often when a private member comes up with a good idea it is talked out for years and years, and then the government introduces it.

I remember the suggestion that we have the likenesses of our prime ministers on the currency of the realm, and even while there was a bill on the order paper in the name of the