

Canada Labour (Standards) Code

is the Canada Labour (Safety) Code, there is legislation respecting equal pay for equal work, and so on. The Canada Labour (Standards) Code is the one that provides for a certain number of statutory holidays per year and a certain number of annual holidays with pay. It also provides minimum wages, a maximum work week and similar conditions.

Bill C-20 seeks to add to that legislation one further provision. I have some other bills that add other provisions, but we will take these one at a time. The provision that this bill seeks to add to the Canada Labour (Standards) Code is that when an employee is laid off or discharged he must receive two weeks' notice. The details set out in the bill make it clear that under these circumstances an employer could lay off an employee by giving him two weeks' notice today but giving him two weeks' full pay, or he could give him notice today that he is through in two weeks' time and, of course, he earns his full pay during that period.

The bill spells out a number of details so as to relate this to matters of overtime and to pay that could be irregular from week to week, but the basic principle would be that no one could be discharged peremptorily without any pay. It is very simple—any individual being laid off must be given two weeks' notice, and that must include two weeks' pay, whether the person works or not during that time. There is the exception, of course, that if a person is laid off for just cause, some misdemeanour or what-have-you, the bill does not necessarily apply, but it does apply if the lay-off is because of want of work. The bill also contains a provision that works the other way, that an employee who plans to leave must give his employer two weeks' notice as well.

The other point I would like to make is one that is indicated in the explanatory note rather than in the bill itself, and perhaps I might read the last sentence of the explanatory note. It reads:

This bill deals only with the case of individual employees being laid off, it being understood that other legislation is required to deal with mass lay-offs or plant shutdowns.

As a matter of fact, one of my colleagues is preparing a bill along those lines. We feel that in such cases the notice should be much longer than two weeks; it should be in terms of three or six months. What we are dealing with in this bill, however, is not the shutdown of a plant or mass lay-offs but, rather, the individual dismissal. We think that in such cases it should be the right of any employee to receive at least two weeks' notice and pay for that two-week period. I suggest that it is a very reasonable proposition, so reasonable and so minimal that one should not have to argue for it at all. The only criticism that I could imagine anyone might make is that the bill should go further. At least, I hope the idea that is in the bill will recommend itself to the House and that there will be approval to send it to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

Mr. Charles Turner (London East): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Knowles) for introducing this bill. I know that in so doing he has drawn attention to a situation in Canada which must leave many of us very unhappy. I say to the hon. member that his bill does not go far enough.

It is time we stopped hiding behind the old excuse that we cannot pass legislation because it is not within our jurisdiction under the British North America Act. Five provinces in Canada—Manitoba, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Saskatchewan—have legislation requiring an employer or employee to give notice of termination of employment. It is time we introduced laws in this country that would stop companies laying off employees when they feel like pulling up stakes and moving to other parts of the country or closing down entirely. These laws should apply from coast to coast and they should be federal laws. When a company has been established in any part of Canada for many years, the management of that company has a responsibility to the community in which it is located.

The city of London, Ontario, has thousands of people out of work because of the closing of Kelvinator of Canada, Robson-Lang Leathers, and the phasing-out of the 27 C.O.D. military base, as well as the recent announcement of the closing of the Eaton Automotive Company. True, the 27 C.O.D. and the Eaton Automotive Company have given at least six months' notice, but what happens to these employees who have given years of long, hard and faithful service to their employers? Many will be unable to obtain another job because of their age, and most of them are too young to apply for their pension. I sincerely believe that industry closing should be subject to investigation by the government and a public body composed of all interested groups, so that employees can be given notice of six to 12 months, where possible, with appropriate penalties for non-compliance.

I would like to read into the record a letter I received from a man who is going to be laid off from the Eaton Automotive Company. He wrote as follows:

• (4:20 p.m.)

I am extremely annoyed at the way plants are closing down in London. I work at Eaton Automotive (Eaton, Yale and Towne) here in London and it recently announced closing of the plant to begin the 1st of January, concluding the 1st of June, 1971. Eaton, Yale and Towne has made a profit of 60.9 million dollars in 1970. It has eleven plants in Canada and plants in twenty-two other countries of the world. Why are we closing? According to Eaton's president, the plant's location is excellent, profits are high, good relations exist with both plant and office personnel, lots of room for expansion and the plant is only twenty years old. Still we are closing.

The company has said it cannot find a product that is profitable. This is a lie! We have had three products successfully developed in our plant, being bucket seats, auto-interceptors (a balloon that inflates before a crash) and most recently the brake system we devised for cars. All three were developed in our plant to the extent of being put on a production line. The plant has sent all three items to the States for production and now says it can't find a profitable product. These products are in production and making money for Americans and not here in Canada where they should be.

So there it stands. Why, I ask you, Mr. Turner, are we closing? Eaton also has the power to take work from one plant,