

Labour Conditions

lions of Canadians are not affluent and, indeed, that millions are in poverty. I suspect that the government has picked up this technique from our friends south of the border, where a massive campaign is being based on unexcelled prosperity on the one hand and on a war on poverty on the other hand. In any event, I am happy there is a realization that some parts of our country are having a pretty tough time and that this kind of legislation is needed.

I believe I have made the point that those of us who live in the northerly areas are tired of being excluded from the provisions of good programs. It should not be up to me to do it but at some point I can see the member from the Northwest Territories rising in his place during the committee stage to move an amendment that the title of the bill be changed to "southern Canada labour standards code". We are going to have to consider this sort of thing if no reference is made to the territories.

When the minister rises to close the debate I hope he will explain his thinking whereby the two northerly territories are excluded. Furthermore, I hope he will indicate whether or not he is prepared to put forward some kind of suitable amendment when this good legislation is being considered in committee, because I believe there should be some way of working out a mutually acceptable amendment to include the two northerly areas of our country.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I want to get into this debate and speak on this measure because I do not believe any legislation has come before the house that is of greater general interest to my constituents than the bill now before us. It deals with hours of work, with vacations with pay, with minimum wages, the sort of things that concern people that I for one was sent here to represent. Therefore, although I perhaps have nothing very original to add to what has been said already, I want to enter the debate.

I do not want to detract from the chorus of congratulations in which the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) has been basking since he introduced this bill. I think it is good legislation and I join with other members in all corners of the house in welcoming it. I do not disagree with the hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Munro) who pointed out that with certain exceptions which have already been noted the legislation goes as far as the constitutional structure of this country permits at the present time. We have already heard about the exceptions, of course, in

[Mr. Rhéaume.]

respect of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories and I will not repeat what has been said on that matter.

I notice that for some reason which is not clear to me—perhaps we can discuss it in detail later—members of professions will not get the benefit of this legislation. As I am a member of a profession may I say that if I were employed by a federal agency I would very much like to be included in the legislation. I should like to ask the minister why members of professions are excluded.

Mr. Byrne: You will have to resign as a member if you want to come down to these hours.

Mr. Knowles: I think lawyers ought to get \$1.25 an hour too.

Mr. Brewin: In the case of members of professions, it really was not the wage rate that concerned me so much, but rather vacations with pay which seem to be strangely lacking for some of us in this part of the world at any rate.

Having said that I welcome this legislation, Mr. Speaker, I think it only proper to point out that this is not a national labour code in that it only covers—I am not blaming the minister or the government for this—approximately half a million employees at the present time. It is true that they are in important industries under federal jurisdiction. However there are over five million people gainfully employed in Canada, and the result of this is that the present legislation deals with only one tenth of all those gainfully employed in Canada.

I realize, and I want to deal with this for a moment, that the reason for this is that our constitutional structure brings the question of minimum standards for labour largely within the field of provincial jurisdiction. I want to urge the government, and the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) in particular, not to be satisfied with the maintenance of this situation, not to be satisfied with saying that we in the federal field are setting an example which we hope will be followed by others. In my view, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that in Canada we establish certain minimum standards of labour legislation across Canada as a whole. Of course there are fields which are properly within the provincial sphere, and there always will be in Canada.

The last time any careful survey was made, so far as I know, of the respective fields of labour legislation by anyone looking at the total picture of jurisdiction was at the time