

Occupational Health and Safety

● (2212)

The Chairman: I would ask the hon. member for Welland to wait for a minute; I want to consider the amendment for a moment. Might I ask the minister the implication of the amendment. My interpretation is that he is suggesting a specific selection or division of two groups of 11 governors selected by different associations. He also seems to add four governors. I am asking whether this represents a spending of public funds. That is my preoccupation. If it does, it might be difficult to move at this time an amendment that would increase the spending.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): It does not necessarily imply that, Mr. Chairman. As you will see from the bill, it will be up to the executive to determine whether these governors are voluntary, these other organizations putting them up. Whether the other organizations pay their expenses to attend meetings or whether the corporation, being autonomous, may decide to do so, there is no commitment in the bill to pay the governors at this stage. That is not clearly provided for. Therefore, I do not think that causes a problem.

I might also indicate that even if it were the case, further on down the road there is provision for private support from organizations which would more than cover any governors' expenses. Therefore, the implication that this necessarily involves public outlays is not justified.

The Chairman: I accept the comment of the minister. I am sure the minister will understand the preoccupation of the Chair at having such an amendment at the last moment without knowing all the implications of the bill. I accept the word of the minister to the effect there is nothing in the bill to provide for a specific allocation of money for the contributions or work of these members. Therefore, I am ready to accept the amendment.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Chairman, there is nothing specific about payment. I just want to make it clear that the minister is saying with respect to that group of people we are talking about that there will be no payment. Otherwise, if at a later time payment was arranged through the public purse, this matter would contravene the powers that concern you, Mr. Chairman, and caused you to raise the first item.

I just raise this question because I presumed the minister is saying there will be no burden upon the public purse as a result of this amendment. He is not saying that the bill does not provide for it and therefore it is quite proper that the government can come along and do it later. What he is undertaking to the House of Commons, and I am sure you understand it, sir, is that there is no provision at all for payment as a result of this amendment. I think we have to make that clear. Although the minister says this, we have to be satisfied it does not go beyond the matters that have been raised by the hon. member for Edmonton West and others with regard to the royal recommendation. That does concern me.

[Mr. Munro (Hamilton East).]

I really rise because in accepting the minister's word I want to reserve the position that this does not establish some kind of new precedent merely because the intention may not be so clear in the bill, although it is apparently clear in the minister's mind. I just want to make sure we understand one another, because it does have some ramification for other matters.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): To make clear why I do not think it is offended, the ruling with respect to the commitment of the official public expenditures at this stage of the proceedings was that it does not by itself imply that it would be the case with this amendment. Nor does the bill call for that. The corporation being autonomous, reporting annually to parliament, it has that innate power to do so. All its funds of necessity do not necessarily come from this government. They come from the private sector. It might be very easy to establish that, if at any time it did pay governors, it could allocate the private resources they would have. In that sense, I do not see how it can be considered a charge against the public purse. Is that a satisfactory explanation?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Yes.

Mr. Railton: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I thought you were going to get back to me. I understand that this is an organization which would be doing research on health and safety. We have had no explanation as to what it would be researching. Those are very general terms. Maybe there should be a statement from the minister as to whether he has discussed this with the National Research Council, the Medical Research Council and the Department of National Health and Welfare.

The Chairman: The hon. member for Welland is asking a question about the responsibility of these people. Is the minister anxious to reply to that question?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Chairman, it is quite a different thing from many council's jobs the hon. member is referring to. The Medical Research Council, as the hon. member knows, funds medical colleges and various researches that are done from time to time in that area. The National Research Council is into the scientific community and the universities. This is primarily related to health and safety in the workplace, bringing that fund of knowledge together, disseminating it to the health and safety committees at the plant level that are to be established as a result of the passage of Bill C-8 last week, servicing the health and safety committees with up to date information of this kind. These committees are set up under provincial statutes. That type of activity is not undertaken in any of the other agencies the hon. member is talking about.

The Chairman: While hon. members were having a very constructive discussion, I referred to clause 14 which states that the chairman and other governors shall serve without remuneration. It also adds that they may be paid such allowance for each day spent in connection with the work of the