

One of the aggravations of the Minister of Labour, as was quite properly pointed out yesterday by members of the New Democratic Party, is that I seem to spend all my time signing exemptions from the code. After one more inquiry in each industry we propose to set up practical standards for the industry, that is, practical in the sense that if 60 hours is practical, then after representations from employees and employers this will become the standard of that segment of the industry where it makes sense. We must remember, of course, the necessity and importance of the companion piece of legislation, the safety code, where regulations are finally coming to completion after much prodding by interested members opposite.

We have to weigh the number of hours we will permit the transportation field, the trucking industry, to work. We have to couple this with the responsibility to society to make sure that a driver is working under the safest conditions and not running on pep pills or falling asleep at the wheel. The two must be balanced. Under the proposed legislation, which we can discuss in greater detail in committee, this will now be practical. This meets with the approval of the strong unions. I use the word "strong" numerically.

If one looks at the latest representations made by the association representing the railway employees he will see that on one page they recommend complete endorsement of the code and on the next page they say, "But we don't want it applied here". In other words, they would like to have their cake and eat it too. Any member who says that we should limit everyone's work week to 40 hours a week, eight hours a day, is not being realistic. I hate to say this. It may be desirable but it is not realistic. Nevertheless, the introduction of the code in 1965 and the adoption of the basic principle by this House has been good. In every industry, with one or two exceptions, we have been able to move from the practice that prevailed in 1965 to a much more enlightened and realistic position in 1971. In the airline, shipping and trucking industries we have been able to reduce the number of hours a person can work without sleep, etc. Rather than the exercise being considered futile, it has been very useful.

There have been many favourable comments about the concept of equal pay for similar work. Some members more knowledgeable than I, know that legislation introduced in the late fifties attempted to do this. The weakness in that legislation was that the onus was on the alleged aggrieved person to instigate an investigation. Few people were that brave, especially when jobs for women were, and still are, scarce in many industries. Women were reluctant to bring to the attention of the department a formal complaint of alleged discrimination in the field of equal pay for equal work. This will now be rectified. That act will be eliminated and this facet of labour legislation will be introduced into the code.

The basic change will be the added responsibility assumed by our inspectors. They now visit employers under federal jurisdiction and check on wages, hours of work and other features of the code. They will have the added responsibility and duty of digging out these forms of discrimination as indicated by the payroll. By using

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the term "similar work" we are reducing the possibility of the odd reactionary employer to circumvent the law by saying that the work done by females is not quite equal.

Some hon. members delved into the area of general discrimination against women in the work force. This is more properly treated under the fair employment practices bill. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) is nodding his head, recognizing his own contribution about the possibility of discrimination in an industry predominantly male or female. He was in reality talking about the provisions that should be included in the fair employment practices bill which will be before the House perhaps this fall and certainly no later than next spring. It will be a companion piece of legislation. The two pieces of legislation cover equal pay for similar work, which will be in the present code, and the fair employment practices bill which will eliminate discrimination practiced against anybody, not just women, discrimination against race, colour, creed or sex.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): As long as you are working on it.

Mr. Mackasey: The government is working very hard on it. The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) referred to the question of public servants. In our department we are working very closely with the appropriate minister and officials in the public service to make certain that this change in the labour code and the present fair employment practices act is applied a little more assiduously and with a little more vigour than has been the case in the public service in the past. As has been mentioned in the debate, Mr. Carson and others who are knowledgeable of the public service have admitted that perhaps we have not been as assiduous as we should have been, but if any of them are listening now they may take my word that we intend to increase our activities in this field and make sure there is no discrimination being practiced in the public service, at least in those areas over which we have jurisdiction.

• (3:30 p.m.)

I do not intend to get into a discussion on equal pay. We can do this when we get to committee. As to the question of annual vacation, let me say I never ridicule the suggestions made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. We admit that his suggestions are based, usually, on his convictions and they are usually reflected in the private bills he has brought into the House for many years. He has urged that rather than make provision for two weeks' holiday after five years' employment, the figure should be increased to three weeks. This sounds like a very simple change, but I have approached the whole concept of standards in its relation to the organized sector of the work force.

I happen to be one who thinks this country would be better off if more of the work force were unionized, and for this reason I am not anxious for labour standards to destroy collective agreements or run ahead of the results of collective bargaining. A study of collective agreements carried out by our research branch discloses that less