

Canada Labour Code

them. In this country our unions are fragmented. They fight with each other. None is capable of evaluating the economic problems which this country faces, problems which at least to some extent are brought on by the lack of an intelligent industrial relations program. We should encourage unions to broaden their scope of union activity and to build into that activity certain social components, not just among its membership but along with management, in order that the tripartite and consultative approach necessary to bring about a more enlightened industrial society can be fostered and advanced.

● (1702)

Surprisingly enough, my colleagues in the industrial sphere have already brought in the meaningless things which are in this bill. Bereavement leave is one of those. I do not know an employee of any company with which I am associated, or with which my friends or partners are associated, who would not be allowed to take two or three days or a week off if a member of his immediate family were to die. I do not know anyone who is not given sick leave, an extra holiday or three weeks' vacation after six years' service. These are minimum standards which no industry in the private sector today would want to be without.

The problem is that there should not be conflicting jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments. We have a federal labour code and provincial labour codes, and no one knows what the minimum standards are. The provinces have direct jurisdiction over health plans, workmen's compensation boards, and so forth, and it becomes rather confusing when the federal minister intervenes and sets one set of standards while the provinces have other standards. Clearly, in this field the federal government should decentralize and surrender its jurisdiction to the provinces.

I agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who reminded the minister of his promise about Heritage Day. A promise is a promise. Even though this may not be a good time to legislate more holidays, it is time to improve productivity in our industries. However, a promise is a promise. This measure is long overdue, and in committee I intend to remind the minister of the promise he made to the rail unions at the time of the Hall commission settlement. I remind the minister that we have every right to expect this holiday to be included in the bill before us.

The unions do not like most of the measures in this bill. It sets inadequate standards. The minimum standards set are not acceptable to labour or business. The Canadian Manufacturers' Association indicated to me that it is not at all happy with this bill because it fails to address itself to the fundamental problems we are facing in our industrial relations process. Who likes this bill? I do not know, but it is certainly my intention to find out in the committee and to remind the minister of his responsibility to bring about some basic changes which must be brought in if our economic system is to survive.

[Mr. Oberle.]

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I should like also to make a few remarks about this legislation whose objectives, I feel, have some merits. I suggest to the House that this legislation is of paramount importance for the future of our labour relations which long since should have been governed by more effective mechanisms. I think it will prove very important in the future, especially in the economic area, and that is why the provisions of this bill may contribute something useful, but one must not only think so, one must say so.

I have listened most attentively, of course, to the remarks which our official critic, the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) has made. I have also been able to understand quickly the provisions, somewhat general in scope, of this bill. When this legislation deals with labour relations, I suggest again that it deals with much more. It deals with justly warranted leave in this day and age and, in the present context, with security of employment and, something which is also important, the health of workers. We will probably have to reach agreements with the provinces in that regard, in view of their responsibilities.

Mention has also been made of setting up of an information centre. That point is of particular interest to me because I feel, or at least hope, that such a centre would enable union workers to obtain all the economic data they need when the time comes to discuss with the employers. Provided with information that is comparable to that of the employer, I feel, on the one hand, a union could better understand the economic effects of its demands and, on the other hand, that the union also has the right to be made aware of the financial situation of a company. So, with regard to the setting up of an information centre, I dare hope it would be of tremendous help to both sides. It might even help draw both parties closer in the interest of the national economy.

If I understand the bill correctly, I gather an attempt is being made to bring to the same table, more than ever, the three parties concerned, namely the employer, the government and the union workers. God knows how often hon. members have made that observation in the House and urged the government to try, as much as possible, to bring all interested parties and sectors around the same table to discuss collective agreements, in a real dialogue to achieve more interesting results than they have in the past. There is no doubt, as my colleagues pointed out earlier, that we will support this bill on second reading. I should also like to point out that I come from a province, like so many of my colleagues, which has gone through difficult times because of the strikes we have had.

This legislation affects only 10 per cent of workers, but I quite understand that it can hardly cover the majority of workers since the act applies to employees under federal jurisdiction. However, I believe that if we could, indirectly, through this legislation, through these correctives, through these amendments give some sort of an example to the provinces, either indirectly or directly, we could make an important contribution to the collective agreements negotiated in each province. But is it possible at this level of government to invent