

Canada Labour (Standards) Code

and co-operation rather than unilateral action on the part of the federal government.

The last point I wish to make has not been raised and I do not want to anticipate a future amendment, but as that clause presently reads in the act it is possible in the future to raise the minimum wage by action of the Governor in Council. We can debate that at the proper time on the next amendment. In the fall of the year members of all parties may feel, as a result of discussions in caucus, from a reading of what is happening in the organized field, from the cost of living and all the other barometers, that it is socially desirable to raise the minimum wage to \$2. If there is a legitimate and persuasive case to be made for raising the minimum wage then, under the provisions of the bill, we shall be able to do so. The underlying factor for establishing the \$1.75 minimum wage was the need for the Minister of Labour to show some degree of responsibility, that is, to show some concern for the plight of people who must work at the minimum wage level while at the same time appreciating the problems of small businessmen in this country who, frankly, survive in labour intensive industries. Eventually, as the different parts of this country are developed, as regional disparities are minimized reduced or eliminated under policies such as have been put into effect by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) in the textile industry which are reducing unemployment, encouraging automation and technological change, thus making that industry more viable and competitive in the export market, we shall be able to look at the minimum wage in an entirely different light. In the meantime, I am hoping that the \$1.75 minimum wage will induce those labour intensive industries to become more efficient and thus more progressive. I hope they will expand and provide for more employment. I cannot afford to take the chance that some of these small industries will be put out of business at a time when unemployment is high and when the regions of the country concerned have no alternative to offer to the people thus displaced.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie rising to ask a question?

Mr. Murphy: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the minister made a statement to the effect that I had anticipated his argument because they had been given to me in confidence earlier this week. I wonder if the minister would advise me which of those arguments, which he claims were given to me in confidence, has not been used publicly for the last two years?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to review all the speeches I have made in the House. I will apologize in case what I am about to say is not correct. The hon. member's speech was one of anticipation. He anticipated all the arguments I would be bringing forward. One example, of course, was the argument respecting the United States and the risks taken and the other was the argument about the provinces. It is possible that the hon. member has done his homework assiduously and has read my speeches on second reading, before the

[Mr. Mackasey.]

committee and those I made last fall. Possibly they were the basis for his speech. If so, I apologize. I now understand where his information came from and what the basis of it was.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended taking part in the debate, but some arguments raised by some hon. members and the minister led me to the conclusion that I should participate briefly. I do not want to delay the passage of the bill.

I think the House should congratulate the minister for raising the minimum wage from \$1.25, which it was not long ago, to the proposed \$1.75 in the space of one year. In saying that, I continue to speak in favour of the motion proposed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), although I was impressed by the validity of some of the arguments the minister used regarding the problems of various small businessmen, various provinces and the disparities between minimum wages in those provinces. He also spoke of the need for time for adjustment.

Although there are certain strong points in his argument, I cannot rid myself of the feeling that the people getting minimum wages pay the same for goods and services as those who are well organized. It seems to me that we are asking people working as water carriers, to take the example the minister mentioned, or as waitresses, or as store clerks, or in other jobs, to subsidize through their cheap labour the profits of a business operating inefficiently in the first place. I know that labour intensive industries wish to increase their productivity through automation, and therefore become less labour intensive, when strong enough pressure is exerted by organizations for wages to be increased. Legislation such as this, as has been mentioned, is therefore an effort on the part of the government to provide the kind of service to the unorganized that unions and labour federations provide for those who are members of some trade or labour organization. Nevertheless, people working in these labour intensive industries are sometimes subsidizing those inefficient industries. It costs those people exactly the same to live. It costs them precisely the same as it costs anybody else when they want to hire a plumber, as someone said, or an electrician, or when they want to go to the dentist. They might not go to the dentist as frequently as others because they simply cannot afford to do so. People like that probably cannot afford insurance, either. So, here we have a group of people who are subsidizing their own poverty. They are locked into that position, which is unfortunate.

If you subscribe to the minister's argument, why bother raising wages at all, because the argument is just as valid at \$1 as at \$1.75 per hour. I was pleased to hear the minister say that the minimum wage could be raised through order in council and that this is a time when there will be a gradual increase in minimum wage levels.

I cannot subscribe to the argument put forward by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander), because you should not really consider what people are worth to a particular industry in terms of their contribution of value to the firm. As human beings, they are more