

Mr. MacGuigan: I want to see it passed because there have been enough speeches.

Mr. Schumacher: The hon. member says he wants it to pass because there have been enough speeches. It is my recollection that there was very little debate on this measure at the second reading stage.

An hon. Member: You were not here.

• (1600)

Mr. Schumacher: That is quite true, I was not here. I was somewhat surprised when I came back and found that it had passed second reading without debate. It went through the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs in pretty short order. What we are faced with now is a measure which has not really been debated in the House, and I think it deserves at least one hour's debate before it finally becomes the law of the land.

The main object of the bill is to create a new statutory holiday for Canadians. As I understood the unemployment statistics which were released earlier this week, we have a great number of Canadians on an enforced holiday. While the figures seem to have dropped substantially for December, the January figures are not comparable in any way. In fact there were some 100,000 more people out of work in January than there were in December. On the other hand we hear people from all sides, irrespective of party, saying that the country has problems.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) says that the system under which we have been accustomed to live is not working properly and that changes must be made. I suggest that it is certainly not the way to make the system work by lessening the amount of work done in the country. All of us being human, the great majority of us would rather work less than more if we had the choice. I do not think there is anything magic in improving the soul by being forced to work, and therefore we should always be looking for measures which would give us more time to fulfil ourselves without being engaged in drudgery. Nevertheless, as I have said, we have heard calls from all sides to make Canada more productive. It does not seem to me to be appropriate at this time to be calling on people to work less.

If this measure is passed the wage bill for the month of February would be increased by a minimum of 5 per cent, if one considers the normal working days to be 20 days a month, but of course there are certain jobs that have to be done whether or not there is a holiday, and those people who are compelled to work on that day will probably get time and a half as a minimum for the work they do, and in some cases double time or more.

As a country we already have a very high cost economy. I know there is at least one group in the country which feels that this holiday was promised to them. I refer of course to the railway workers. Apparently when the Hon. Emmet Hall was arbitrating in the pay dispute with the railways in either 1973 or 1974, the last time there was a strike in the industry which resulted in the House passing legislation to force railroaders back to work on the understanding that their claims would be arbitrated, that learned arbitrator inserted a clause in the settlement stating that the workers would receive another holiday called

Heritage Day

Heritage Day. I find it passing strange that that learned gentleman would think that whatever he said would be binding on Canadians at large. I know he was given wide powers to settle that dispute, but I do not ever recall any legislation setting up that arbitration giving him the power to establish a new holiday.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Would the hon. member permit a question? Is the hon. member not aware of the fact that at the time the Hon. Emmet Hall made that award a bill approving Heritage Day had already been passed in a committee of parliament, so the idea did not come from him? He was simply working on something that parliament was talking about and was expected to pass.

Mr. Schumacher: Madam Speaker, I am certainly aware of that but I find it very surprising that the hon. member should now be espousing the view that if a measure is passed through a committee of one of the houses of parliament, that gives it some sort of legislative authority.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It gives it a good start.

Mr. Schumacher: The hon. gentleman has been here a long time, I know, but I have never heard that type of philosophy espoused by anybody associated with the legislative process in this country, that just because something has received committee approval it will become the law of the land!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I wanted the hon. member to tell the House the truth.

Mr. Schumacher: I was not telling anything but the truth. The fact is that the Hon. Emmet Hall at one time was a member of the Supreme Court of Canada. I would have thought that if the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) did not understand the legislative process, maybe the Hon. Emmet Hall, being a learned student of the law, might have had some understanding of it. It seems to me that it was a complete misrepresentation of the situation for railway workers to have an arbitrator produce something like that in his report.

I understand why railway workers might feel they have been "had" to some extent by that award. I suppose you could criticize their own representatives before the arbitration tribunal for allowing that learned gentleman to make the finding he did, but it would seem to me to be only common sense for anybody to understand that nothing is the law of this land until it has passed all stages in both Houses, and received Royal Assent.

Nevertheless, we could look at the railroad situation as it applies to holidays. Throughout history the western part of Canada has suffered problems in the transportation industry.

When driving west last summer when the House recessed for the summer I was passing through the prairies on a weekday, not a week end, and I noticed there was a great number of trains moving on the transcontinental tracks, whereas in September when I was returning to Ottawa, also by car, and I travelled through the same part of the land on a week end I did not see any trains moving