

*Department of Labour Act*

Minister of Labour who deserves this power, but I suggest that it is clear to all members that we do not have a Minister of Communications who deserves it. Therefore, the members of this House should be very careful about giving that power in law to unspecific and unknown individuals who may hold power in the future. That is the crux of the matter. Does something exist in our past which leads us to be careful and wary? I suggest it does.

I would like to paint a scenario for the minister which he and his colleagues may or may not have considered. Imagine a taxpayer who wants to form or strengthen a labour union, or perhaps someone who wants to take the risk and start a new business—

**An hon. Member:** He must be crazy!

**Mr. Hawkes:** An hon. member says he would have to be crazy. In the present economic climate, the hon. member is right. But this is a country with rich potential, and given a government committed to the riches and to the development of a good life for Canadians, we could achieve this relatively quickly. One of the things I would like to have, if I were starting a business or if I were trying to strengthen a labour union, is information. Information would be necessary for me to decide where and how to carry out my plan. I wonder if the taxpayers of Canada would have more faith and trust that their funds were being well spent in the collection and dissemination of information on labour-management relations, which is what this bill is all about; I wonder if they would trust that information just a bit more, if there were some kind of tri-party group—labour, management and academics—who decided what the questions were to be, how the information was to be gathered and how it was to be disseminated. I wonder if Canadians might trust it a little more because of the long-term reputation, historically at least, of Statistics Canada; whether they might trust it a little more if that body, that part of the federal government were given the responsibility in this case. I wonder if Canadians might trust it a little more if there were some kind of intergovernmental body which included representation from provincial and federal governments, and they had to collectively decide what information to gather and how to disseminate it. Or would we even give it to an academic department of a university?

• (1530)

We say that information is important. We say that at least a portion of the taxes collected in this country should be spent to get it and to make it known. But has there been a single moment's thought or discussion in cabinet about what would be the best route in Canadian society to spend that money wisely and credibly? Can we believe that a partisan politician, part of the Liberal government today, has the experience, the wisdom and the objectivity to spend those dollars wisely, to get accurate information and to disseminate it accurately? Do we have to be suspicious in this House that, given that authority, the questions are likely to be loaded toward the answers which people want? In any event, when the government gets answers it does not want, it does not publish, but when it gets

answers it wants, it does publish. When that happens once or twice, on what is the credibility of the data based?

It reminds me of an issue which has been raised in this House once or twice in the last week. We have been told that when one phones up a census office in Canada today, one is told, "If you do not want your friend or neighbour picking up your form, simply mail it to Ottawa. It will go to Ottawa where strangers will look at all that private information and you will not be embarrassed by your friend or neighbour knowing it." Then we find that post offices are handing those forms over to one's friend or neighbour. That is going on across Canada. It was going on yesterday, it is going on today. There is our supposedly trustworthy federal agency—

**Mr. Blais:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Not only is the comment by the hon. gentleman out of order, but it is completely false and without foundation.

**Mr. Hawkes:** I think I was just called a liar, in somewhat more polite terms. I would bring to the minister's attention, if it has not been done already, the fact that this is happening in several rural communities in northern Alberta. An hon. member from the New Democratic Party brought that situation to the minister's attention earlier this week. It may be that the minister does not want it to happen; but I think the evidence is growing to show that it is happening. I am sure that by now all of us who serve in this House have had phone calls from people checking—

**Mr. Blais:** Order.

**Mr. Hawkes:** —the veracity of what they have put down on what is supposedly a private and confidential form. I raise this simply because in a free and democratic society—

**Mr. Blais:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been sitting in this House a long time. Your Honour has been in this House for as long as I have been. Hon. members usually act very responsibly. It is very seldom that I have witnessed such lack of responsibility in what is expressed by an hon. member of this House—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Blais:** —as I have presently heard from the hon. gentleman. I still insist that the matter is out of order.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, the point raised is certainly a matter of debate, and the hon. gentleman may wish to enter the debate, but it is not a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Order, please. I do not want to go back into each of the points of order. There is a difficulty. The hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) has tended to stray from the subject before us. No one in this chair has ever found the perfect definition of relevance so that it could be utilized on every occasion. The minister is, in some sense and to some degree, correct. The hon. member has strayed. I am not talking about the issue as to whether the point of debate is correct, or false; that is not a matter for the