

Canada Labour Code

in the hours of work provision contained in this Bill No. C-126. I do not know how, by any stretch of the imagination, local elevators and feed mills could be considered to come within these classifications. I can understand how the large grain elevators situated along our lakes and rivers, and through which pass the flow of grain from the prairies, could come under the act. However, I do not understand how a feed mill in one of the villages in our area, which buys its grain from elevators at Goderich or Sarnia and brings it in carloads or truckloads to the mill, mixes the feed and sells it to the local community, could be considered as a federal work, undertaking or business. It is purely local.

These people have submitted to their local representatives in this house their views in this regard. They say the following:

Through announced decision of the federal Minister of Labour all feed mills and grain elevators in Ontario will become subject to the provisions of the proposed Canada labour (standards) code. With stated applicability to "federal works, undertakings and businesses" it was surprising to learn that feed and grain elevator operations of all kinds were being so classified for purposes of this labour legislation. Inability to obtain any explanation for declaring local feed mills and elevators to be "works for the general advantage of Canada" it can only be assumed that such businesses were accidentally grouped with terminal and western elevators licensed under the Canada Grain Act.

I hope the minister will clear up this situation for us. These people go on to say this:

Opposition to enforced involvement under this legislation is not based on any wish or desire to restrict the earning power of employees of member firms. The operation of an average feed mill or local grain elevator does not lend to shift work or the employment of casual labour at peak production periods or seasonal pressures that occur during harvesting seasons. Operational skills that are only gained through training and experience are required for successful plant performance and customer servicing. Key employees cannot be relieved by inexperienced labour during rush periods nor can plants afford anything less than the fullest utilization of available manpower.

The situation is quite understandable. There are only one or two men around such a mill and they have to be credit managers, salesmen, buyers and do whatever else there is to be done around the mill. Casual labour cannot be brought in to do this sort of thing. These people go on to say:

Another point to be borne in mind is that this is the initial step taken toward government control over payrolls and working conditions on a national basis. Before the act has been approved by parliament, powerful labour organizations are clamouring for higher minimum rates of pay than provided for under the present bill. Largely situated in rural areas—

I think this is very important.

—or among the less populated centres of the province, local feed mills and grain elevators are not required to compete with large industrial centres for their labour requirements. If forced to operate under jurisdiction of the federal labour code, mills and elevators so situated would be automatically deprived of an opportunity to take advantage of labour pay rates that prevail locally.

Perhaps the most unreasonable feature of the minister's ruling to this section of the industry is that members of the local feed and grain trade are being placed under federal labour jurisdiction, while unrelated business operations of local character are subject only to provincial labour regulations.

We strongly urge that local feed mills and grain elevators be defined as other than federal works.

One certain effect of bringing these local feed mills—I am not saying so much about grain elevators—under this legislation will be an increase in farm costs at a time when farmers all across this country are complaining of the serious cost-price squeeze. I think the minister and the government, Mr. Chairman, should take a close look at this situation as it relates to local feed mills and grain elevators. I hope the minister will explain to us, for the benefit of these people, why they are included. Perhaps he will tell us whether or not they were intended to be included. Perhaps he could tell us if he will give serious consideration to exempting these local feed mills and grain elevators from the provisions of this legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Chairman, tonight I have a few remarks to make respecting Bill No. C-126, but I believe this piece of legislation as a whole is acceptable if it tends to improve workmen's lot. Surely any measure tending to improve workers' conditions in life must be supported. I for one intend to make only remarks likely to further improve, if possible, that piece of legislation.

I think the minister should be told to improve the bill, especially clause 5, which could bring about conflicts of authority between the federal and provincial governments.

That is why I feel the minister, with the help of his assistants, should thoroughly examine this legislation in every detail to make it as adequate as possible.

The main reason I rose to speak was to mention also that we have received numerous complaints, particularly from trucking companies. In my opinion, those complaints should be studied and examined closely in order not to antagonize or annoy this sector of our industry with useless problems.