

Labour Conditions

Mr. Gene Rhéaume (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, I should just like to take a moment or two to echo the dismay of my colleague, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) in relation to the bill before us which specifically excludes the Northwest Territories and the Yukon territories from its provisions. I rise not only because these areas are excluded, but because it seems to me to be a sad state of affairs when, in the introduction of legislation of this kind, the minister does not even refer, in passing, to those two northern areas of our country, which for some reason or another known only to the minister were not included. I am not quarrelling with the minister, but it does raise this question in my mind. Why in the world would the minister not want the legislation to apply to those two areas of the country where more than in any other areas of Canada there are federal operations and large numbers of undertakings being carried out by the federal government?

I do not want to rub it in, but when the minister was having his conference with the provincial labour ministers early this year I raised the question with him. As can be found on page 134 of *Hansard* I asked him if it would be possible to have representatives of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon Territory sit in on these meetings and the minister promised me at the time that he would look into the matter. I know he was very busy but he said he would look into it and give the house an answer. For some reason or other the conference was suddenly upon us and he either could not or did not make a decision to allow spokesmen from these two territories to participate in the discussions. It makes me ask this question: Who in the world was it that gave the minister his advice? Was the advice, such as it was, checked against the opinion of residents of the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories? Was any contact made by the minister with the councils of the Yukon and Northwest Territories to find out if there was any way in which the legislation could be changed or revised to aid and abet those of us who live in the north, in our efforts to get suitable labour legislation? I know for a fact that the minister never discussed any of the provisions with me and I am certain he never let the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) know what his intentions were.

On many occasions in the house I have pointed out to the minister the need for a careful study of the whole question of labour legislation in our northerly areas. I have also

raised many other problems with him that I felt his departmental officials should be investigating. If he had deigned to take my advice or had even looked into my suggestions he would have found that useful research needs to be done. In his comments last night the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) noted this shortcoming. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, between the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) protecting my rivers in the north from exploitation and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre protecting my people, there is not a half decent cause left for me to champion.

Mr. Herridge: We know you are a worthwhile fellow to support.

Mr. Rhéaume: I would hope the minister would not only give us an explanation on this occasion, but would keep the matter in the back of his head.

Mr. Knowles: Get it to the front of his head.

Mr. Rhéaume: Well, there is lots of room in the minister's head. At any rate, I would hope that this kind of oversight does not occur again. As a member of this house it is a continual source of dismay to me that every time a piece of legislation comes before the house or an announcement is made there is no mention of the northerly areas. I am not too thin-skinned, but I feel the time has come when those who sit on the treasury benches are going to have to remember that there is a large piece of Canada that does not readily fall into the sphere of federal-provincial relations. They have got to consider these matters, and I can guarantee that on every occasion from now on that members of the treasury benches fail to refer to these two territories they can be sure that the hon. member for Yukon and myself will be up on our feet bugging the treasury benches until we get some recognition.

Mr. Nielsen: They are already bugged.

Mr. Rhéaume: I am convinced that somewhere in the federal bureaucracy there is a minor and evil bureaucrat whose sole job it is to go through proposed pieces of legislation to make sure that all good programs such as unemployment insurance, ARDA and so on contain within their provisions no reference to Indians, minority groups and the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

I was fascinated by the statement of the hon. member for Hamilton East (Mr. Munro) that there is a recognition today that mil-