

Bills of Exchange Act

concede, and some room for negotiation. On the other hand, I think there should be the same willingness to concede in these places where there will be no such hardship, particularly in the larger cities, so that the same willingness to negotiate may be displayed there; and where it will not do any harm the five-day week may be implemented. Beyond expressing that general hope I do not think that we in this parliament should go any further in expressing an opinion as to what should be the decision one way or another.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, a large number of the working people in the constituency that I have the honour to represent are already on the five-day week. Those who do not yet enjoy the five-day week hope that the day when such will be their privilege is not far off. Accordingly, I am sure the people of my constituency, like the people of similar constituencies across Canada, will agree that if the principle of the five-day week is good for one group of workers it is good for other groups of workers; therefore I am happy to support this bill.

I was pleased to hear the words "negotiation" and "collective bargaining" used in connection with this matter. In other words, I am glad to note that bank clerks and bank employees realize that they are workers like the rest of us, and that like other workers they feel they have similar rights.

I note the way in which this matter is being handled. It is being put on a permissive basis. The federal government is not by legislation dictating to the banks that they have to close on Saturdays, but rather provision is being made so that, once this amendment to the Bills of Exchange Act has been passed, they can go on the five-day week if they wish.

The parliamentary assistant, in speaking on the bill, said that it would deal with other types of business as well as banking. I am glad to note, of course, that there is in the bill a provision which indicates that cheques and other instruments may still be issued on Saturday and cashed or negotiated by any who are in a position to do so. The reason I mention that is that I think attention should be drawn to it so there will not be any confusion in the minds of the people, any notion that once this goes through they can no longer write or cash cheques on Saturday.

While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, speaking in support of the principle of the five-day week for bank employees, I should like to say a few other words in connection with the same principle. The parliamentary assistant has pointed out that this bill merely

makes it possible for the banks to go on the five-day week. But at least the government is going that far. I feel they should likewise give a lead with respect to their own employees. Quite a number of groups of workers employed by the federal government are already on the five-day week. I would suggest that serious consideration be given to extending the five-day week to all government employees. I could mention groups such as one we were discussing the other night, namely the printing bureau, and others. The government knows the various groups, some of which are already on the five-day week and some of which are not. I suggest that if the fact that many employees have a five-day week is the reason bank employees should have it, it is also a reason civil servants and government employees generally should have a five-day week.

The other thought I should like to leave with the government on this occasion—and I shall do so very briefly—is to express the hope that the government will give even more consideration—I am glad to note that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) is in his place, for this comes under his jurisdiction—to the possibility of extending legislation with regard to the five-day week for workers generally, even though this may have to be done by co-operation between the dominion and the provinces.

On November 5 of this year, in reply to certain questions that I had placed on the order paper, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour gave an answer, as recorded on pages 690 and 691 of *Hansard*, indicating that representations concerning the forty-hour week, or the five-day week, have been made to the federal government. These representations have come mainly from trade unions. We now know that similar representations have come from the banks on their own behalf and on behalf of their employees. The answer given on the pages of *Hansard* to which I have referred suggested that the Prime Minister had made a certain reply to Mr. A. R. Mosher concerning this matter, and that the Minister of Labour had written a letter on July 24, 1951, concerning this question to Mr. George Burt. The letter from the Minister of Labour was a little longer than the letter from the Prime Minister. I was glad to note that the Minister of Labour said that officials in his department were actually discussing and studying the whole question of the effect of a shorter work week on the productivity of labour, which is one of the reasons for seeking shorter hours.

Both the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) pointed out in these letters that under the