

*Supply—Labour*

will not be necessary because he has made a recommendation that the railway and the unions concerned try to find an agreeable formula to be incorporated in a collective agreement. I have been assured by the railway brotherhood and by both railways that they are working toward this objective. If that is not possible, the government and parliament may have to take greater responsibility, but I hope that may not be necessary. I believe encouraging progress is being made along the lines first recommended by the commissioner, Mr. Justice Freedman, in his report.

I referred a few minutes ago to the Canadian Labour (Standards) Code. I think the introduction of this code during the past year has given rise to intense activity in the Department of Labour. It certainly has made the Minister of Labour work a few hours longer than he normally would daily, certainly longer than when I was minister of forestry. This new code has created a large number of difficulties. Extensive use has been made of provisions by which submissions can be made for deferment under Part I, that is the hours of work, and to a considerably less extent submissions have been made for deferment under section 11, minimum wages.

I can assure hon. members that the question of deferment with regard to wages does not present too great a problem. With regard to deferment of hours, each particular industry and in some cases each particular industrial operation, has to be studied and a decision made on its merits. They are all being dealt with as rapidly as possible. In dealing with these deferments, we have urged the parties concerned to work out a satisfactory basis for adjusting the hours of work over a reasonable period of time, that is where the hours of work are in excess of the period fixed by the new code. I know a number of questions that were put to me seemed to be critical, and some of them sought information, about why the Ministers of Labour did not intervene sooner in the Ontario truckers strike.

The answer to that is simple. It was not uncommon for truckers in most parts of Canada, more particularly in central Canada, to work 70 hours a week and in some cases 80 hours a week or even more. Then as a result of the passage of the national code they will be forced to drop down to a 40-hour week, more than a 100 per cent curtailment within a matter of months in some cases. I am happy that my view proved to be the correct one,

[Mr. Nicholson.]

that if we could get the operators of the trucks and the employees to find a formula themselves that would reduce the hours of work to a 40 hour week within a reasonable period of time, it was far better than having the Minister of Labour use a big club.

As a result of difficult negotiations led by competent officials of the Ontario Department of Labour, and my department, we were able to bring about a very desirable conclusion. We have now got a work week that will, quite shortly, come within the letter of the Labour (Standards) Code although it is now within the spirit of it. The parties have found, I may say, that by averaging out over the 52 weeks every year, and using the other flexible features of the code, the results have not been quite as bad as they thought they were going to be when they were making their representations to members of this house about a year ago.

I can say this, that the code has already had a very important effect in eliminating pockets of substandard wages as well as excessive hours and unfair treatment of labour in many parts of Canada.

I should like to refer also to an increased activity in the women's bureau of the Department of Labour. This provides a continuing focus in our department on policies and programs relating to the standards and conditions of work of women. The bureau aims at bringing about a wider understanding of the role of women in the labour force, and to promote working conditions in every industry throughout Canada that are conducive to the well-being of the women, and efficient production. The role of this women's bureau is becoming increasingly important as more women, both married and single, enter the labour force.

There are other aspects of the work of the department to which, if time permitted, I might refer. I think perhaps I should refer briefly to the legislation that has to do with safety in employment. You will recall that, in the speech from the throne this year, as well as last year, reference was made to a new code dealing with safety in the fields in which the federal government has responsibility. Such a bill, as you all know, I am sure, is now in the other place. Its purpose is to ensure the safety and well-being of persons employed in industry within the federal field of jurisdiction. We have had several discussions, I might say, with provincial officials to develop a co-ordinated safety service in Canada. They have been very satisfactory,