

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 11, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1110)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-34, an Act to amend the Canada Labour Code and the Financial Administration Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling for second reading the proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code. I must emphasize that these proposals are the result of close and, I would say, very successful consultation with labour organizations and employers' associations.

Mr. Speaker, the Canada Labour Code is the main body of federal legislation that governs the very important business of work. The Canada Labour Code has always shown the way for all other labour legislation in this country, and other official authorities have always used it as an example in drafting their own legislation. Some 600,000 workers are subject to the provisions of the Code, and I am referring to the provisions on occupational safety and health.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the responsibility we have as the leader in this field, and in doing so, we are aware of how important it is to present legislation that considers the obligations of employers and the rights of employees, the need for modern labour standards and the incredible rate at which the job environment and the labour force in Canada are changing, the possibility of letting the collective bargaining process take its course but also the legislated intervention that is available to us. However, Mr. Speaker, the balance we are seeking cannot be imposed, either through legislation or any other means.

I repeat that the amendments we are proposing today are the result of close consultations, during which these proposals were discussed at length with labour and management representatives. The amendments were prepared in co-operation with experts in the field. They have been the subject of

discussions, negotiations, revisions, and finally, I would say, of an agreement. Mr. Speaker, all this took time. I do not think it was time wasted, because I believe that today, in the House, we have a piece of sound legislation in which the interests of all Canadians are served to the best of our ability. We have, I repeat, been able to balance the interests of workers with those of employers, at a time when it is imperative for our economy and Canada's industry that all parties should work together.

Last Tuesday, on June 5, I gave a fairly complete summary of the main clauses of the draft amendments to the Canada Labour Code. I do not intend to repeat today all the points I have already explained. A transcript of my comments may be found in *Hansard* of June 5, 1984, on pages 4363, 4364, 4365 and 4366, where Hon. Members will find a detailed description of the amendments to three parts of the Canada Labour Code, namely Part III, Part IV and Part V.

● (1115)

Without wishing to repeat the explanations I gave last week, Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend some time this morning on the proposed amendments to Part IV of the Canada Labour Code, which deals with occupational safety and health, one of the major concerns of the labour world today, which requires urgent action. According to the preliminary data for 1982, in Canada more than fifteen million work days were lost because of accidents on the job and occupational illness, which is more than two and one-half times the number of days lost owing to strikes and lock-outs. The amount of compensation paid was nearly \$2 billion in 1982; this does not include the indirect cost, estimated at an astonishing \$7.8 billion, which, Mr. Speaker, is hardly something for this country to be proud of. Aside from the obvious human suffering, it is clear that the impact on the economy and productivity is enormous. Since regulations and inspections provided by the Government to improve occupational safety and health have their limitations, it is becoming increasingly necessary to obtain the active co-operation and direct participation of labour and management in the regulatory process.

Mr. Speaker, with this legislation the Government hopes to give both management and labour an opportunity and the requisite motivation for increasing their involvement in occupational safety and health programs set up in the work place itself. We earnestly hope to create a climate in which all participants will work together to resolve occupational safety and health problems.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to making some very real progress in this area. First of all, we believe that all workers