

Mr. Wenman: The reality is that we could have three or four days of full debate in the House of Commons when everyone could talk about the problems of workers in Canada. We could have 10 days of debate in committee. The Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Federation of Labour, business and other workers' groups could appear before us. We could come back and have two or three more days of debate here and probably wind up this debate. Would the Hon. Member agree that the problem is one of the political will of the Government, which has 16 more government days? It is a matter of how the Government wants to use them. If the Government wants to use them for a good debate on the problems of the workers of Canada, it can do that. Does the Hon. Member agree with that?

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley West for his question. I agree that that is the prime responsibility. About two weeks ago in the House, prior to first reading of the Bill introduced by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet), I asked him why it had taken three years up to that point to bring forth the legislation. After four years of acting as if they were Conservatives they start talking like Liberals in the last few months before an election. That is typical of that bunch over there. While this legislation is welcome, I do not think that lets the Government off the hook. I agree with my Conservative friend that the Government is ultimately responsible for the delay which has now got the House into a bind.

It is easy for road-blocks to be put in the way, either on purpose or by chance. The Government is responsible for leaving it to the last minute of the eleventh hour. In recognition of that responsibility, I hope that the Government will say to my Party and to the Official Opposition that one day of debate, if that, is enough on second reading. We in the NDP would agree to one speaker from each Party. We would agree to move quickly through committee with a time deadline in order to ensure that we could have a one-day debate, or a debate with one speaker from each Party at third reading, on the understanding that the Government will accept its responsibility and undertake that this legislation will go to the Governor General and be proclaimed before this House is dissolved. We do not want to spend another four or five years before deciding whether Canadian workers should stop being injured and killed in the numbers to which Canada has regrettably become accustomed during the past generations.

Mr. Wenman: Mr. Speaker, would the Hon. Member also agree that if we were to have a debate in the House of Commons and move the Bill to committee to hear representations from the CLC, the Canadian Federation of Business and other groups, we could improve this legislation? If not, why not?

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, it is always possible to improve. I can assure the Member that after two or three years our NDP task force has all kinds of suggestions for improvements. But we also recognize that, whether by accident or design, we are facing deadlines. We think that lives are

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more important than politics. We are quite willing to settle for half a loaf and put aside hearings, if necessary, in order that less people will be injured and die. The Government is to blame for leaving it so late. We are angry about that. Damn it, let us get on with the job because people's lives are at stake.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there further questions? The Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young).

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that labour movements such as the Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliates have lobbied quite extensively for this legislation. Consultations between the Congress and the Government would indicate that extensive hearings before a committee would not be required. Even though they may not be satisfied with the total Bill, it is acceptable to them in its present form. Would the Member clarify that?

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, the answer is, yes, that is my understanding. Many representatives of unions across Canada as well as the officers and staff of the Canadian Labour Congress have been in close consultation with the Government. I know there have been consultations with my own colleagues in the New Democratic Party. I suspect as well that there have been some consultations with members of the Progressive Conservative caucus. They have expressed their willingness to forgo the opportunity to appear as witnesses, even though they would very much like to do so. They consider it urgent that this legislation, limited though it is, pass as quickly as possible. They are willing to surrender perfection for the sake of saving lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to debate. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie).

● (1600)

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, the Hon. Member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman), for his excellent motion today regarding safety in the workplace, and especially for addressing the concerns of women in the workplace and for pointing out that the Government is addressing the issue of technological change inadequately.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the Ontario Construction Association for its television advertisements on construction safety. These messages appear on television regularly and give a very vivid message which shows that many workers are not adhering to safety rules and regulations, which in turn causes many accidents. Being a former foreman of the Manitoba Telephone System for many years, I was involved in safety training and I found that it was a continuous job to train apprentices and even some of the old hands in using their safety glasses, hard hats and other equipment.

I think everyone has the responsibility to report any unsafe conditions in any industry. If the NDP knows of all of unsafe conditions in the workplace, wherever they may occur, there is