

*Department of Labour Act*

legislation which empowers the Minister of Labour to spend taxpayers' money to inquire into anything that strikes his fancy, with no necessity to report the results thereof.

In principle, Mr. Speaker, that creates legislation which is open to abuse. The government opposite, with a history of that kind of abuse, with a President of the Treasury Board who refuses even a simple request of the Public Accounts Committee for information on the results of inquiries, asks us to expand the power of the Minister of Labour to make inquiries and spend taxpayers' dollars, with absolutely no requirement that the results of the inquiry be made available to the public generally and to members of this House.

It is interesting to see that no one on the other side is standing up to defend this legislation, other than the minister, but if I had to do that because of an order from the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or the whip, at least that part would bother me. It would concern me if I had to support a piece of legislation giving a particular individual at a particular moment in history the unchecked power to inquire into anything in the industrial sector which he or she felt was worthy of inquiry, to spend taxpayers' money on it and not have a concomitant responsibility to make the results of that inquiry known to Canadians. It is somewhat like the argument that ensued in committee when this bill was discussed. As I read it, the hon. member for Don Valley West looked at the main estimates and said that, according to the parliamentary secretary, dispensing with the *Labour Gazette* would result in a saving of \$225,000 a year. The minister came along a little later and said that \$400,000 was saved. The member from our party looked at the main estimates and said that, for information purposes, the budget is down \$31,000. It is possible to say that you save \$400,000, or \$225,000, because you did not print a publication, but have you really saved that money if you take it and use it to print something else? I could not help but think of a housewife who would go into the supermarket and pass by the bins of oranges, apples and lettuce and say, "I won't buy a dozen oranges or a dozen apples or a head of lettuce today. Gee, I have saved \$43 already." Then she goes on to the meat counter and doesn't buy a roast and doesn't buy this or that, and she says she has saved another \$202. With that kind of logic it would be easy to walk out of the supermarket having saved \$3,000 or \$4,000 at each trip. The logic is that if I do not spend the money on these things at which I look, I have saved it. But my banker becomes a little disturbed because he does not see it; it is not in my account. This is the kind of logic involved in the saving related to the *Labour Gazette*.

● (1520)

What is overlooked is that the *Labour Gazette* evolved from a kind of dry, academic statistical document into a document which, for the most part, could be viewed as containing discussions. What this means is that the articles contained in the publication are written by a variety of people and present a variety of points of view. The articles are written by people from within the labour movement, management groups, universities and by people from within government who had their

thoughts on labour in Canada published and disseminated to an interested audience.

When the minister indicates that there are more efficient ways to publish information, then I think we should be cautious. We should have learned from the retroactive date. We should look at that with suspicion and ask the minister whether the money is being used to publish the same kind of information wherein labour has an equal access to the publication of their views as do management, university professors and bureaucrats. Or, as taxpayers, are we now faced with an alternative expenditure which is essentially under the control of one person, the Minister of Labour? Are we now receiving, and do we have the potential to receive, a series of publications which put forward a single perspective? Is that what we will receive when the *Labour Gazette* is no longer published?

People from the department say let us get rid of the *Labour Gazette*, let us go over here, gather some information and make some inquiries and then the minister shall determine what is to be disseminated and how. This may be somewhat of an unfair analogy, but it seems to me that that principle prevails in any regime which we would classify as a dictatorship. One of the first things Adolf Hitler did in Germany was to take over the control of the means of the dissemination of information. I am not suggesting that there is a parallel in personality or intent, but I am suggesting that what the minister brings forward is a bill which provides him with that kind of authority in this field. He is provided with the authority to decide what questions to ask, whether or not the answers are accurate and whether or not to disseminate the information which flows therefrom. We may have a minister of good will, a minister who is brilliant in his tasks and who is fair; but, in essence, he is putting into law a very odious principle, that is, the power to single-handedly determine what information is collected in the first place, who it is collected from, how it is analysed and whether or not it is accurate and should be published.

Is that a principle which makes members opposite feel comfortable? It is a principle which does not make members on this side feel particularly comfortable. It is analogous to what we experienced in terms of a series of energy ads. The government took some \$6 million worth of the taxpayers' money to publish these ads. It controlled the content of the ads, the publications in which they were placed, and the final message was that everything is well in energy. Yet, here we are in June of 1981 and we are told that we must pay 66 cents a gallon more for gasoline. Yet we are told that all is well in energy in Canada today.

**An hon. Member:** Stick to the topic.

**Mr. Hawkes:** I am reminded that the House pays careful attention to relevance. Are my comments relevant, Mr. Speaker? Would Mr. Speaker feel comfortable if the bill before us were to allow the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) to decide in perpetuity how taxpayers' funds should be spent in the dissemination of information with the kind of track record that exists in the energy field? We may have a wonderful