

*Canada Labour Code*

other industrial countries with which we compete in the international marketplace.

The Bill will be called "right to work legislation" by our NDP friends because it seeks to remove the closed shop and union shop provisions in the Labour Code. I prefer to call it a "freedom of association" bill.

Since the Bill was last debated in the House, certain important things have happened, not the least of which was the acceptance of entrenchment in our Constitution of certain cardinal principles of democracy, one being the freedom of association. Before our friends, the Liberals and New Democrats, decide to talk the Bill out, they may well be advised to take into consideration certain factors which have become evident since the Bill was debated the last time. We are in the midst of a very serious recession and it would be smart for them to consider the impact of our present labour laws on the average worker in light of the recession. They should also consider the impact of new entrenched provisions in our Constitution which deal with freedom of the individual, whether he be a worker or anyone else.

From the outset, let us not be stingy in giving full credit to the great pioneers or even heroes of the union movement. Let us give credit to their contribution over time, going back to the early time of the industrial revolution. Without doubt, their efforts resulted in a more equitable redistribution of that part of the industrial wealth and benefits and wealth which have been created by the machine, the benefits which have resulted from the multiplication of human energy by the machine.

We all agree that the role of unions in our society will become even more important, if not totally indispensable, as we make another transition from the era of the industrial society, and the revolution which was associated with the industrial society, to an even more profound revolution causing even greater social adjustment and upheaval. I am speaking, of course, of the transition into the information and micro-electronic society.

Human energy is being multiplied at an ever-accelerating pace by the microchip, the computer and the robot. The benefits achieved by the industrial society over the last 200 years will be equalled over the next 20 years. It should not be very difficult for anyone to understand the incredible adjustments which must be made in our social structure to accommodate such rapid and profound change in the industrial workplace.

The effects of the industrial revolution have not been confined to the workplace and to the industrial relations process. Our society as a whole has undergone some very fundamental and profound changes in many other areas. One such fundamental change, of course, is the way by which the individual in our society relates to his Government. I make the comparison of this relationship today with the way it existed 200 years ago, in the pre-industrial society. In the agrarian society, it was important for a person to secure his comfort and economic well-being in old age by having a large and extended family.

There is no doubt but that the industrial society has brought with it a greater degree of freedom and a reliance by the individual, no longer on the extended family, but, rather, on the Government and organized society to which he is prepared to surrender a part of his personal freedom in return for the benefit of living in an organized society which affords very important social benefits. I am making this point to illustrate that the industrial revolution has brought with it a change from the large, extended family to the nuclear family, which is the order of the day today, just to illustrate how important the changes in the industrial workplace have become.

We are now moving into the information society which will produce even greater individualism and freedom, not so much in the political sense, but, rather, concerning economic comfort, freedom and security. However, that security and comfort will not be delivered by the large, extended family. We expect it will be left to the institution of government which we have chosen for ourselves to distribute in a fair and equitable way the benefits which were created by the industrial machine and which will now be created by a robot and a computer.

Unions can and must play a very important role in this new society, but it must be a responsible and equitable role. Union leaders must recognize and accept the fact that a third partner has entered the bargaining process, assuming the responsibility to protect the right and satisfy the aspirations of not only those in our society who can afford the protection of large, powerful, integrated unions, but of all workers in our society, including those who do not even have the opportunity to join unions. Of course, I speak of the Government and its many institutions as the third player in the future industrial relations process.

• (1530)

Let me talk about some of the institutions which we have already put in place to deliver some of the benefits that bring about this comfort and security. For instance, there is the minimum age law. No longer are there the sweat shops and 13 and 14-year old children working in the mines. There are very sophisticated laws respecting workmen's compensation and workers' safety. These are not laws that were brought about as a result of the unions' political power, although they certainly have played a role in it; they have also been brought about because of the incredible wealth that has been created and responsibly distributed by all participants in the workplace. We have a much more enlightened workplace than we had 200 years ago.

There is Unemployment Insurance that will carry us over the crises that occur from time to time as a result of the cyclical nature of our free market economy. The recent recession has been a perfect example of how important and beneficial these institutions are and how important it is to build on them. This recent recession could well have been as serious in social terms as the Depression in the 1930s if these institutions and insurance programs had not been in place. While there certainly was hardship and still is, it has been very much cushioned by the fact that we have these very important social institutions.