

Lloyd Francis, MP for Ottawa West, spoke today at the annual ILO Conference in Geneva and reaffirmed Canada's support for the ILO. He said, however, that Canada shares certain concerns which had led to USA withdrawing from membership in the ILO in November 1977.

Mr. Francis told the conference that the Canadian Minister of Labour, the Honourable John Munro, had initiated the review of ILO activities as they affect Canada, aimed at determining whether Canada was deriving full benefit from ILO programs in such fields as occupational safety and health, industrial relations and quality of working life. The review subject to agreement by labour and employer organizations, would be under tripartite direction and would also involve provincial governments.

Mr. Francis said that Canada recognized that the ILO's main purpose was to help developing countries, where it could try to improve labour conditions and to strengthen such fundamental human rights as freedom of association, collective bargaining and equal employment opportunities. However he said, "we are convinced that it is necessary to broaden the base of interest in the ILO within Canada." The review would inquire whether ILO standards, research and technical information are getting through to Canadians and are of benefit to them, and whether there is sufficient interaction between ILO studies and Canadian realities.

While making clear Canada's continuing commitment to ILO aims and objectives, Mr. Francis voiced concern also over the reasons which led to U.S. withdrawal from the ILO. "The Departure of the U.S.A., he said has highlighted grave issues confronting the organization which should be of concern to all of us, who on the one hand believe profoundly in the United Nations systems and in the ILO, but who, on the other hand, believe also that the valuable purposes to which the ILO is dedicated should not be degraded - by focussing on narrow political concerns instead of the ILO's social, economic and human goals; by failure to observe due process when dealing with accusations against member states; and by selecting particular targets for attack while ignoring other situations where justice needs to be done." He urged the Conference to maintain the integrity of ILO procedures.

Mr. Francis emphasized the value of ILO programs which continue throughout the year, and noted that the current difficulties relate mainly to the annual conference, which lasts only three weeks. He expressed hope the U.S.A. would decide on an early return to membership in the ILO.