

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

LABOUR CONDITIONS**REQUEST FOR MATERNITY PROTECTION FOR FEMALE WORKERS**

On the orders of the day:

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I gave a brief progress report in reply to the question asked on April 17 by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway as to when the government proposes to ratify the maternity protection convention passed by the I.L.O.

The convention in question establishes the right of mothers to get maternity leave without losing their jobs and to collect cash and certain medical benefits to be provided out of public funds or by means of a system of insurance. It does not specify the methods by which its requirements should be implemented by the ratifying nations. Since the convention is deemed to be partly within the authority of this parliament and partly within the authority of the legislatures of the provinces, ratification can only be envisaged when effect is given to the convention by legislation in the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, only two provinces have laws allowing maternity leave and forbidding dismissal because of pregnancy. The legislation in two other provinces provides for regulations to be adopted in the matter but that is as far as they have gone. Consequently, the laws of those two provinces are not yet operative. We favour ratification and are working toward making it possible.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Would I be in order, Mr. Speaker, to inquire which provinces those are?

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid not.

SHIPPING**CHURCHILL—REQUEST FOR ACTION TO LENGTHEN SEASON**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. In view of the numerous requests that have been made over the years for a longer shipping season for the port of Churchill, can the minister assure the house that his department is aware of the desirability of this action?

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): I am very much aware of it, sir. I went and looked at Hudson strait recently

[Mr. Speaker.]

myself to see if something could not be done about it.

Mr. Simpson: May I ask a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister then say what was the basis for the reply he is reported to have given during his recent visit to Churchill when he was asked if his department could not do something about it? He is reported to have said that they would if it were brought to their attention; "I am quite sure they would."

Mr. Pickersgill: It was right after that interview I went to look at Hudson strait.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

TRANSPORT**PRAIRIE RAIL NETWORK GUARANTEED AGAINST ABANDONMENT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): May I address a question to our good humoured Minister of Transport. Has the minister been made aware that the order in council passed last month which sets out the prairie rail network guaranteed against abandonment departs in a significant degree from the announcement the minister made?

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): I am not only aware of it but my face is very red indeed. The mistake has been corrected or, at least, I have asked my colleagues to correct it. I am confident they will do their best to make an honest man of me.

Mr. Schreyer: I should like to ask the minister if it is the intention to pass a supplementary order in council or a relieving order in council.

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, it would require an amending order in council. Speaking quite seriously, I am regretful about this error. I take all the blame myself because I did not compare the recommendations with the map carefully enough. It does sometimes happen that when there are these recommendations which contain a lot of detail, it is assumed they are in order but sometimes they are not. I take all the blame. If the error has not actually been rectified I have enough confidence in my colleagues that I feel sure it will be.

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Albert): In connection with this whole matter of the new transport commission, I should like to ask the