

worked under Atomic Energy of Canada and others, who were excluded from the protection of the Canada Labour Code.

With that in mind, we went right across this country. We came up with recommendations which we presented in a report called "Graveyard Shifts: Life and Death on the Job in Canada". It was a report of the New Democratic Party special task force on occupational health and safety in the federal workplace. We presented that report to the House of Commons and to the various Ministers of Labour who have held that portfolio over the last number of years. We talked, as I said earlier, with both management and with labour.

I believe we have an agreement in this country that the law as it presently stands is very inadequate. That is the purpose of our intervention, because we believe that those inadequacies must be addressed. Even though the proposals made by the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) through Bill C-34 are still not perfect, for the sake of the workers who come under the present federal jurisdiction, and those workers who will come under federal jurisdiction if Bill C-34 passes, we believe that the proposals presented by the Minister of Labour must be passed before this House has its summer recess, and must be passed before a federal election occurs.

● (1210)

There are a number of reasons why we believe that is necessary. Labour legislation always seems to be passed prior to a general election. The last time that happened was in 1978. What that means is that if this legislation is not passed now, and it does not matter whether there is a Liberal or Conservative Government after the next election, this legislation or its equivalent will not be introduced into this House of Commons.

Last week we proposed to the Government and the Official Opposition that we agree to a one-day debate on second reading, and then send it to committee for study, but we want to know that by June 29 the legislation will be brought back to this House and dealt with prior to our summer recess. As the occupational health and safety of our Party, I can guarantee that we will sit morning, afternoon and night to make sure that as many representatives as possible of industry and labour can make their presentations before the committee.

We also agree that there should be amendments made during the committee process. There are areas of the legislation which need some improvement. But for God's sake, Mr. Speaker, let us not let any more people die. Let us not let any more people be unprotected by the Canada Labour Code. Let us not leave unprotected by the Canada Labour Code those hundreds of thousands of federal Government employees. Let us not ignore the people who work on the rails and on drilling rigs similar to the *Ocean Ranger*. Let us not ignore their concerns. Let us make sure before we leave that all three Parties in this House stop playing political games and pass legislation which, despite its inadequacies, is certainly an improvement over the legislation that many people in this country have to work under today.

We can give examples of the problems which exist currently. We can talk about federal Government employees across the

### Supply

river in Hull who work in places where the ventilation is imperfect. We can talk about the problems of people who work on video display terminals and their increased absenteeism from work, which is documented. We can talk about the people who have died in grain elevators because there are not enough federal Government inspectors. We can talk about my home communities of Flin Flon and Snow Lake, mining communities, which fall under federal jurisdiction and do not even know that there federal labour people should be up there inspecting their work sites. We can bring up all those things in debate.

What I would really like to bring up at this time, Mr. Speaker, and will continue to emphasize, is that the only way those people will have any chance of improving their health and safety is if we in this House commit ourselves to passing this legislation prior to our summer adjournment. We can do it. Just last Friday we passed three pieces of legislation in one afternoon. When it comes to our own raises, this House has been known to act very quickly. When it comes to legislation which is near and dear to the hearts of some people in this House, we act quickly.

Bill C-34, the amendments to the Canada Labour Code, is very dear to the health and safety of workers and we would like to see that legislation passed as soon as possible. We are committed to meeting with the House Leaders of the two other Parties. We are committed to dealing in the House or behind the curtains to make sure this legislation passes. Again I call on both Parties to make that same commitment this afternoon during debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault):** Questions or comments? Debate.

[Translation]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to take part in this debate, following comments by the representatives of the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, both of whom appear to acknowledge the importance of this legislation, Bill C-34, whose purpose is to amend the Canada Labour Code.

I do not want to get involved in a partisan discussion, nor do I want to try to establish that one or the other party is to blame for the fact that these long awaited amendments to the Canada Labour Code have not yet been passed in the House. I must say I was very sorry to see the two motions of non-confidence proposed today, one by the Progressive Conservative Party and one by the New Democratic Party. It is not terribly important to know what we should or should not have done in the past, or whether we are one, two, three or four years late in amending the Canada Labour Code. The important thing is not to look back but to look at what we have before us today, a number of long awaited amendments that will considerably improve the Canada Labour Code—that I am sure—amendments that will help Canadian workers in their job environment, amendments wished for by all the major labour organi-