

Supply—Labour

government to propose the necessary amendments to the legislation which would modify the constitution of the board and its procedures, not merely adopt the attitude of Pontius Pilate and wash its hands of the problem. That will not dispel it.

Mr. Nicholson: On a question of privilege, with all due respect to the hon. gentleman I do not think he could have heard the question which was put to me. I was replying to a specific question put to me by an hon. member. I certainly do not disagree with the hon. gentleman's expression of opinion right now.

Mr. Lambert: I would like the minister to have advanced that statement as an argument, not as a question of privilege. I did not suggest that the minister was seeking to emulate Pontius Pilate at all in his reply. What I had in mind was a general attitude. Not all hon. members who are present here are fully conscious of the details and the background of the quarrel and they will continue to be uninformed unless they are given some explanation of the problems which have arisen and the difficulties which are encountered in connection with this issue. I am not asking the minister to make a pronouncement as to who is right or who is wrong. But certainly he should bring us up to date by telling us what difficulties have arisen in connection with the Canada Labour Relations Board.

I wish to turn now to consideration of another matter, the Canada Labour (Standards) Code. I recall that during the passage of that bill I and many of my hon. friends, as well as some hon. members on the government side, raised certain very valid objections to what seemed to be a dogmatic and stubborn approach by the then minister to the application on a general basis of the 40-hour week and the question of whether permits for overtime could be obtained in the case of emergency. I indicated to the minister that there were some industries to which this rigid limitation of hours of work within a week could not possibly be applied unless they were to be loaded with most fantastic costs and most difficult situations.

• (12:40 p.m.)

There was some recognition of this difficulty by provision in the act for deferments, but the axe was intended to fall some day. The minister never replied with respect to the problems of the oil and gas industry and related supply industries, where for example at the present time, in the Rainbow lake and Zama lake areas of northwestern Alberta, development is taking place very close to the

boundaries of British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. As long as these firms operate in the province of Alberta they do not come under the jurisdiction of the Canada Labour (Standards) Code, but immediately their operations cross provincial boundaries, whether in the trucking of pipe or conveyance of goods or even in the case of workers moving across boundaries from their camps to drilling sites, then the code does apply.

I defy the minister or any of his officials to indicate how the code will apply to a firm moving in crews to drill sites or to exploration sites say in wintertime when the crews may have to travel for seven to ten hours from their camps. These men work a long stint when they get to the sites and then come out for relief. The same thing applies when moving in loads of drill pipe. The truckloads go in, are delivered, and then trucks must be brought out. It is often impossible to accomplish all this in a 40-hour or 48-hour stint.

Besides, many men will not undertake these jobs unless they are guaranteed 60 to 70 hours work. It is isolated work; otherwise these men work under good conditions. In addition, their lives are predicated on a certain higher standard of living earned during a part of the year, and they refuse to work unless they can be guaranteed long hours and consequently higher pay.

The minister knows as well as I do the conditions that applied to the Peace river dam construction and the high wages that were being paid. Throughout western Canada representatives of the contracting firms and of the British Columbia government went around guaranteeing hours of work far in excess of those specified in the act simply because of the isolated nature of the work and the fact that the men could not move their families to live near them. The oil development in Alberta, in northeastern British Columbia and in the Northwest Territories is becoming farther and farther removed from the centres of population. It is ludicrous to say that families will follow these developments in all circumstances because of the absence of schools, hospitals and other reasons. The men who go out to do this work in wintertime—the drilling must take place during the winter months because of muskeg conditions—are going to insist upon these long hours of work at high wage rates and no legislation is going to force them to work less. Therefore I think there must be a degree of flexibility which is not now apparent.