

*Minimum Wage Rates for Employees*

anywhere would admit that there are people in any job who are not worth \$1.25 an hour, or a guaranteed wage. I would be very, very careful in setting up any wage standards which would purport to provide that \$1.25 an hour be paid regardless of the worker's effort.

I have another objection to this bill, that too often minimum wages become maximum wages. If we guaranteed \$1.25 an hour for certain types of labour, this would tend to become a maximum wage, and although this bill says it would not prevent anybody getting better terms of pay, you cannot legislate minimum labour rates without affecting every other labourer in this country. I suggest that if, with regard to all jobs under federal jurisdiction, we were to set a minimum wage of \$1.25 an hour regardless of whether they were worth that rate of pay, it would be very difficult for people in the primary industries, in farming, fishing or the woods, where there are small operations, to compete at all.

The United States, which is very highly organized in its labour field, have never seen fit to put forward this type of legislation at the levels we are asked to legislate at the present time.

**Mr. Knowles:** Is the hon. member sure of that?

**Mr. Bigg:** I am referring to the \$1.25 an hour that it is suggested we put in operation. Not since—

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Bigg:** I have listened to your speech. I will allow you to ask a question at the end of my speech. I may not have time.

**Mr. Knowles:** Is the hon. member aware that in the United States there is such a movement?

**Mr. Bigg:** I am aware of the movement in the United States in this regard.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I think hon. members will realize that they cannot force a question or make a statement as an interjection without properly having the floor.

**Mr. Bigg:** Mr. Speaker, I am particularly surprised that this type of interference should come from the best known parliamentarian on procedure in Canada. This bill has such a general application and is couched in such general terms that one can hardly ascertain what it is really purporting to do; therefore I think it is fair to be very general in criticizing it. I say that, generally speaking, in the United States at the present time nobody has been so optimistic as to expect a higher minimum rate of pay than \$1.15 an

hour. I understand they are hoping to raise it to \$1.25 an hour some time between now and 1965.

This is another of those bills, Mr. Speaker, which if put through without due thought might well price us out of the markets of the world. We have some difficulty in this regard already. One of our difficulties is to keep the cost of our primary products at a minimum. To obtain suitable farm labour is a serious problem today throughout the farming areas. I have been a farm labourer and I know that somebody going to the farm for the first time is hardly worth more than his board, until he learns to take part in the rural work. Certainly it was very difficult in the hard times of the thirties to find that type of work. He may well be learning his trade as a farmer, and if he is going to become a good farmer his time is well spent. With our very progressive farm policy it will be very few years before he is prepared himself, to take on the job of farming.

Mr. Speaker, in these few remarks I must say that, although I am completely in favour of minimum wages, where there are well thought out labour contracts for our industries, armed services, the mounted police and nurses in training—I am in favour of giving them more encouragement during their apprenticeships—I cannot approve the bill in this form. I would suggest this is no time to put it through in haste. There will be many opportunities later to attack the question of minimum wages, and I will then back any such well thought out plan.

**Mr. A. J. MacEachen (Inverness-Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I wish to associate myself with the remarks of my colleague from Hamilton East in the warm endorsement he extended to the principle of this bill. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) introduced a similar bill to the House of Commons in November, 1957 and I had the opportunity at that time to express my attitude and my support for the principle of a minimum wage. In doing so my support is consistent with the attitude of the national Liberal party of Canada, which is in favour of a federal labour code. This federal labour code will apply to industries under federal jurisdiction and work done under federal contracts. Such a code would establish a minimum wage, fix a maximum working week and determine vacations and statutory holidays as well as provide standards for health, safety and working conditions generally. Therefore, as a Liberal member I am pleased to applaud the initiative shown by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. The purpose of the bill is clear. It is a basic, humanitarian purpose. The President of the United

[Mr. Bigg.]