

Canada Labour Code

member of Timiskaming. These are questions of basic importance and a member of parliament, should not be accused of being a socialist or of having socialist tendencies or of being a communist because he believes in elementary social justice.

Mr. Speaker, there are also abuses in some areas of this country where workmen do not know the extent of the protection available to them under the Canada Labour Code and the provincial labour codes in spite of the sometimes praiseworthy efforts of governments, civil servants and unions to inform the Canadian workman of his rights.

It is quite interesting, Mr. Speaker,—and I would like to mention this—that during the 1972 federal election that was held on October 30, I defeated a Progressive Conservative opponent who had a peculiar concept of the right to strike, among other things. His views were strongly rejected, and this is why I am here in the House of Commons today. I do not fool myself, Mr. Speaker, I know I was elected to work in the Canadian worker's best interests, and I publicly undertake, once more, to continue to do so.

The Canada Labour Code under its present form includes a few protective measures for the employee who suddenly finds himself unemployed because his employer has decided that he would be replaced by a machine, for instance. The legislation also bestowed on cabinet the authority to prepare technical regulations and to set up procedures to secure proper enforcement of the legislation. I will not deal with that since it was already referred to in the previous debates, when this bill was considered.

I did admit that I am not an expert in this area, even though I am very much interested in this matter. This is why, Mr. Speaker, I wish we could interview government officials and public servants in committee, for instance, during the Christmas recess, on the way the existing legislation is enforced, in order to later determine the impact of the measure advocated by the hon. member for Timiskaming.

I suggested the lengthy Christmas recess which they seem to consider giving us, because the government often finds excuses for not referring these bills to the committee, such as this one for instance: "We are already overwhelmed with work". Then, Mr. Speaker, I take advantage of this opportunity, today, to suggest that standing committees of the House of Commons be allowed to sit during Christmas, Easter and summer recesses, to consider these bills. However I should like to see the devotion of members sitting on these committees taken into account and that a special allowance be granted to them.

I had before me, a few minutes ago, a notebook that I lent to one of my colleagues who intends to speak of this matter—

An hon. Member: You only have one supporter.

Mr. Corbin: On the contrary, I think that there are a lot more.

As I was saying I had before me, a few moments ago, a note book containing an analysis and various studies on the legislative concept of the severance pay recognized in some countries. I have but little time to consider it in detail but I would like the bill standing in the name of the hon. member for Timiskaming, to be referred to the com-

[Mr. Corbin.]

mittee so that we might spend more time on the various aspects of the matter and consider at the same time what is the practice in other countries.

It is important that we continue our studies on this matter, that the federal and provincial Departments of Labour continue their analysis of the existing practice in the field of severance pay and that they make the findings of these studies and analysis available to members. We must also listen carefully to the views of labour unions.

If some hon. members are seriously in doubt about the usefulness of this bill, although I do not think that such is the case, I suggest that they look around them anyway the next time they visit their respective ridings.

● (1640)

Let them go and meet the employees of the manufacturing industry or those of the pulp and paper industry. Let them put on the shoes of a 55 or 60 year old workman who is being laid off because it has been decided that a machine should replace him. Let them go out and meet a man who has a number of children at home to support, who has mortgage payments to make, who has often bought his car on credit through a finance company and who has all sorts of other family and financial obligations to meet.

How would we react if we were in this individual's circumstances, Mr. Speaker? This man who is working today may receive tomorrow a two-month advance notice that he will be laid off. He has no choice because technological progress rules everything nowadays. When he reaches age 60, this man is no longer accepted or even acceptable.

If he succeeds in finding another job, it is sometimes at a much lower salary. And this is far from being funny. You might say that governments will provide for the worker and that they do so to a large extent in the case of a worker in the type of situation which we are studying today, but nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it is always a humiliating experience for a man who has worked for a living to depend on welfare or on the generosity of governments for financial help or support.

Of course, the government has acted wisely in bringing about this legislation, but whatever might be said, the work ethic still exists in Canada. There still are people who want to earn the money they receive. I believe that as long as this is the case, we should give them all the support that we can, and enact legislation in order to ensure that they receive the best possible social justice.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to give other members a chance to speak. I wish to repeat what I said earlier in my remarks; the hon. member for Timiskaming has my support and I agree that this excellent bill be referred to the committee for further study.

Mrs. Albanie Morin (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, it is with some reserve that I am taking part in this debate today on Bill C-44. I would very much like the hon. member to know that I am neither for nor against this bill, but some of its provisions are not very clear to me and it is on this basis that I would like to speak.