

Canada Labour Code

important because what we find here also extends into the provincial field, down into small business, even to the small corner grocery store, into professional offices, and so on. Though they are not governed directly by the Canada Labour Code, nevertheless, through provincial adherence to general practice, all firms, no matter how small, will tend to adhere to the regulations.

In a general way, I would say these amendments will decrease productivity and increase labour costs without giving rise to corresponding increased efficiency.

I would like to mention one thing which specifically affects my riding and the province of Manitoba. At the recent annual meeting of the Manitoba Wheat Pool held in Winnipeg, it was pointed out that these amendments to the labour code will cause serious problems for grain handling companies on the prairies because of the adoption of a 40-hour week with only eight hours' overtime permitted within any one week. This was highlighted by Mr. Harold Sneath, the outgoing president of the Manitoba Pool Elevators, who said it would cause serious problems in the grain industry at the local level.

What are the implications of this 40-hour week, with only eight hours allowed for overtime? At country elevators, managers have their own working period. Elevator managers at country points are busy for ten, 12, or 15 hours a day at times, and they take corresponding time off. It is not unusual to find that an elevator manager has taken a couple of days off to go hunting. This is because he worked overtime previously. If this legislation is imposed on the grain handlers, it can only mean increased costs to the farmers, and I question whether it is worth it.

This point should be considered very carefully: it is going to increase costs at the country elevator points. I would hope the government would see fit to introduce an amendment which would give some sort of relief. Certainly, being an elevator agent in this country seems to be one of the more desirable occupations. They do not have a large turnover, and most country elevator agents seem to enjoy their work. So I would think this is an important feature. Should we, in effect, create a situation where at the country elevators the cost to the farmer is to be increased?

We have lately heard from the Hall commission on the abandonment of rail lines in the west. In fact, the abandonment of rail lines and the abandonment of small elevators are one and the same. If this labour legislation comes in as presently constituted, it will effectively kill small elevator points in the country: farmers will haul to larger elevators handling more grain and using a larger staff because they can give the farmer better service during the busy season. This is the considered opinion not of myself alone but of Mr. Sneath, the outgoing president of the Manitoba Pool Elevators. The fact that negotiations have been going on between the management of the pool elevators and the union means that the management's position has been weakened with this legislation.

In another portion of the bill there is reference to dust control. I do not understand why country elevators should be

[Mr. Ritchie.]

under federal dust control regulations. I think it is another instance of too much federal interference in what is really a matter of provincial jurisdiction. At the lakehead, the Manitoba pool had to spend \$1,100,000 on dust control equipment to satisfy the Ontario department of the environment with respect to dust emission. This is significant. Why should country elevators come under federal jurisdiction, under an Ottawa bureaucracy which is insensitive to their needs, where western Canadians have little or no say and where western Canadians are not prominent at all? How can you stop dust from circulating when a truck is dumping grain from an elevator? The operators and the farmers delivering grain simply get out of the way, but presumably the federal inspectors will be able to produce a long dissertation on how to get out of the way of dust produced by grain being dumped. It will certainly cause a lot of problems and cost a lot of money.

It is doubtful if all of these regulations and inspections will really be in our best interests. We have to decide whether all these regulations are needed. In country elevators, a great deal has been done in the past two years with regard to dust control. The elevator companies are to be commended for that.

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As for holidays, Boxing Day is to be added to the list of eight general holidays. We are still debating whether to have heritage day in February. The number of holidays in Canada is such that our calendar is beginning to look like a Mexican calendar. That holidays are important in assessing labour productivity is of some significance, I suggest. For example, when discussing the textile bill which was passed under the ministership of Jean-Luc Pepin—who is now saving the unity of this country—the textile industry told the committee that one of the significant reasons for the inefficiency of Canadian textile workers was that their competitors in other countries did not have nearly as many holidays. I was surprised to learn that the industry was not referring to low income countries such as Taiwan and Malaysia, but to countries like the United States where the number of holidays was significantly less—as I recall, only two or three. The number of general holidays in Canada is approaching between 4 per cent and 5 per cent of our total working period. This is not insignificant.

Italy, for example, also has many holidays, be they official or religious ones. The government did attempt to compress them into the Christmas and New Year holidays—which workers tended to take off anyway, whether they worked or not—but encountered stiff resistance in this regard. I suggest that in Canada the number of holidays seriously affects our productivity.

The other day the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien), in talking about productivity, said that the wave of pessimism had spread too far. He had some suggestions to make in this regard. We in this country are presently trying to decide how to handle labour, management and government relations with a view to reducing the number of strikes and increasing productivity, something we all support. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) has talked about tripartism. We in