

Canada Labour Code

which under normal conditions, would call for someone physically fit.

In any event, I shall conclude my remarks, since it is my belief that, on the whole, the bill is good, and should generally meet our approval; we might put forward some amendments when we examine the various clauses, so as to make light changes in this bill.

I hope, after all these explanations, that we may, in a year or two, see the possibility of amending the bill in the light of the experience gained.

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, after taking a look at clause 5 and at some other clauses of this Bill No. C-126, I wonder whether the principles set forth in this bill are not basically unsound. It seems to me that the federal government is interfering in a field that should be left to the judgment of private enterprise and of recognized unions existing in this country. If the government would propose legislation to give more power to the labour movement, I think this would give better results than would be achieved by the bill under scrutiny.

Here we are faced with legislation dealing with working hours which it is intended to restrict to 40, with minimum wages which are to be set at \$1.25, with annual holidays in federal works, undertakings and businesses. Now, federal undertakings and businesses do not concern only what is happening on parliament hill and do not involve only civil servants, but they deal with many other things, for instance the railways and the trucking employees of the C.N.R., the C.P.R., etc, etc. Those are government businesses, government undertakings.

As was pointed out a while ago, by the hon. member for Lake St. John (Mr. Lessard), this legislation seriously affects the trucking industry or private trucking companies, not only in the province of Quebec, but also in other provinces, I am sure. Why create difficulties, not only through this legislation, but also through the grants given government corporations but denied to private enterprises?

Mr. Chairman, are winter works considered as federal undertakings or businesses? In this field, there are unincorporated communities in certain regions—my region is one of them—where the federal government allows people to be paid 85 or 90 cents per hour.

Under the new act will those performing winter works be guaranteed \$1.25 an hour? The minister gives no such assurance, nor does the bill.

Some will say that winter works concern the province and the federal government and that they are joint programs. Now, can we say that joint programs, to which the federal government contributes the larger share, come under the federal government? Many questions could be put to the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen).

As a matter of fact, here is a question related to Bill No. C-126. Clause 5 which we are now considering deals with hours of work and states that an employee shall not work more than eight hours a day or 40 hours a week.

Today, in many parts of the country, and thanks to the work of labour unions, agreement was reached on the 40 hour week.

For example, in my constituency the steel workers of America union leaders entered into a contract with representatives of Noranda mine. The contract stipulates that employees shall not work more than 40 hours in any given week. Therefore, this does not require the intervention of the federal government nor the adoption of Bill No. C-126.

In many other areas and in other economic sectors of the province and the country, those hours of work are already in force under contracts entered into between employers and employees. But why adopt a labour code and thus create confusion and embarrassment, for instance, to private industry and more particularly to the trucking industry, as I said earlier?

The Minister of Labour is perfectly aware of the cases submitted to our attention.

In any case, we will no doubt have the opportunity until tomorrow to submit official representations from the truckers association of the province of Quebec and other parts of the country.

Mr. Chairman, as I said earlier, it seems to me that this bill and its principles are basically wrong. Personally, I have more confidence in an agreement entered into between free labour unions and free industries than in a piece of legislation or an act whereby everybody is forced into what I would qualify as disloyal competition, in many fields.

As a matter of fact, when this bill becomes law, everybody will insist on a 40 hour week or an eight-hour working day, because the federal government will grant that to all firms coming under its jurisdiction.

But this will create other difficulties for those who are not bound to the federal government. For instance, there are the small businessmen, those who operate service sta-