

*Labour Conditions*

ing to our estimates, 10 per cent of the employees to whom the code will directly apply are not now getting as many as seven paid holidays, while some of the 10 per cent are not getting any. One factor which has been of persuasive importance to me is this: In the railway industry where there have been strong unions for many years, the non-operating employees, the largest group, have through collective bargaining established seven paid holidays, we are meeting this standard. If we were to adopt the standard of eight holidays, for example, we would be adopting a standard which has been obtained by only 54 per cent of the employees within the scope of the legislation. So we would be legislating for a group of employees amounting to almost half those who come within our jurisdiction, and this in our judgment would be beyond the proper limit for a bill which proposes minimum standards.

**Mr. Knowles:** Before the minister leaves that point, would he comment, if he sees some way to do so, upon the fact that under the Civil Service Act nine statutory holidays are provided? In other words, this is the number of holidays all civil servants get. Does there not seem to be a considerable gap between nine holidays and the seven specified in this bill?

**Mr. MacEachen:** There is a gap, of course. What we are doing in this legislation is this: We are obliging private employers to observe certain minimum standards. We expect to enforce this bill and make it obligatory. In so doing we have to take into account the results of collective bargaining and the impact this measure will have generally on the labour force under our jurisdiction. In these circumstances it seems to me that the proposal for seven statutory holidays is reasonable. To go to eight would be to legislate for a large part of the labour force. The hon. member should bear in mind that we are legislating here for minimum standards.

I realize there is some significance in the fact that nine statutory holidays are provided for government employees under the Civil Service Act. However, hon. members may wish to consider whether what the government as an employer decides to do is always an appropriate standard to apply to private employers in the economy.

The question of the actual holidays specified here has been raised by hon. members. The ones included in the bill are I think the accepted holidays, although there is a provision that other holidays may be substituted.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

For example Dominion day and Victoria day are each established as legal holidays by other statutes; the names are established by other statutes. So we have to observe these days.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Winnipeg North dealt with the important question of reconciling the provisions as to hours of work with the take home pay of employees. As I pointed out in my opening statement, the application of the 40-hour week provision in circumstances where excessive hours have been worked would result in a drastic reduction in take home pay. We have wrestled with this problem. That is why in this particular bill we have made provision for a transitional period of 18 months so that in the introduction of standards its effect can be taken into account. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said he would not want the result to be seriously damaging. We have reached the conclusion that, given the time factor, 18 months after January 1, 1965; given the bargaining opportunities which will be available, and given the reluctance of employers—and I think they will be reluctant—to reduce take home pay, the result over that period will not be seriously damaging. Having said this I return to what I said in my opening statement, namely that excessive hours of work can be bad for health. They certainly lead to industrial accidents and to inefficiency and maybe it is better for workers to have additional leisure in certain circumstances and more time for rest. Certainly, having looked at some of the statistics which are available on the class of workers likely to be affected most, I conclude there is no doubt they are working too many hours a week.

**Mr. Knowles:** Would the minister permit a further question?

**An hon. Member:** Filibuster.

**Mr. Knowles:** I admit that I ask it in view of the fact that he has had some experience in setting a deadline. Does he feel it is sufficient merely to set a deadline? What happens if within the 18 months period the necessary adjustments have not been made to ensure that certain employees do not suffer reductions in take home pay?

**Mr. Churchill:** Agreed.

**Mr. MacEachen:** The alternative of course is to provide that at the end of the period