

*Industrial Relations*

two it might have to be increased to \$1.50. But on the basis of the present situation, it must be admitted that this figure of \$1.25 would settle certain difficulties and would materially improve a serious situation.

A while ago, I was saying that in Saskatchewan the minimum rate is \$34 a week. If you examine the situation in the other provinces, you will see that in Newfoundland, the standard is 50 cents an hour for men and 35 cents for women; in Prince Edward Island, it is 90 cents an hour. The situation in Nova Scotia is rather unusual in that only female employees are mentioned; it is set at \$21.60 per week in centres of more than 8,000 population, but it is much lower in smaller communities. In New Brunswick, the minimum rate is 60 cents an hour and, in Quebec, it is 70 cents an hour in certain areas, including the district of Montreal, and 64 cents in the rest of the province. In Ontario, the standard is \$1 an hour; in Manitoba, 70 cents; in Saskatchewan, \$34 for a 44-hour week, and \$34 a week in Alberta.

Most Canadian provinces have minimum wages which are much lower than the said minimum of \$1.25.

It has also been mentioned that some 50,000 employees would benefit from such increase in minimum wages. If, for example, minimum wages were increased to \$1.10, some 23,000 employees would benefit.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, \$1.25 per hour is fair and reasonable under the present circumstances.

How does the government intend to set minimum wages at \$1.25 per hour? As I said earlier, there are several problems and I mentioned, for example, that of small industries situated outside large urban centres.

As I said before, those small industries have often established themselves in those places because labour was cheap there. We should not forget that it was that cheap labour which made possible the industrialization of those areas.

I come back to the point I raised earlier. If a minimum salary of \$1.25 an hour was set for the whole of Canada, it would not only tend to reduce the number of industries in some parts of the country, but also induce an exodus of workers towards large cities.

The government is conscious of those problems. As far as I am concerned, I know

about them personally because I have studied them carefully. I am sure that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is also aware of the situation.

We must consider here the whole problem concerning the standard rights of the workers.

Since the government stated repeatedly its desire to introduce general legislation on those problems, I think that all the main problems mentioned in the address in reply to the speech from the throne should be taken into consideration.

Indeed, it would be to no avail to submit piecemeal legislation to be brought before the house.

I can assure you Mr. Speaker, that the promises made by the Liberal party during the last election will be carried out and that every Canadian will benefit therefrom and, of course, will be pleased.

But, the legislation which the government may introduce will not satisfy the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, nor his party. As I said before, they are people who love to put the cart before the horse. They are men in the van, and we need men like that. I admire them for their optimism—

[Text]

**Mr. Knowles:** We want to get out of the horse and cart age.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lachance:** I can assure the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre that, in the end, the cart will certainly run very well, even if the horse is before it, and not behind it.

I have had the opportunity of studying those problems seriously for some time. I think that the freedom of the labour unions—which until now was the cornerstone of our system with regard to workers' rights—to promote better labour standards is still the best weapon to help workers solve their problems.

I feel that there is good reason to be satisfied. According to the figures given by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Byrne), you will note that there is only a small number of workers whose salary is lower than that minimum. It must be remembered that, in some cases, for instance hotel and restaurant employees, not one hon. member believes that those people get only the minimum wage prescribed by the act.