

Non-Smokers' Health Act

will strongly support our efforts to reduce worker exposure to dangerous substances. Those committees are the cornerstone of Labour Canada's policy of internal responsibility, under which workers and management should find mutually acceptable solutions to problems in the workplace.

Whenever parties cannot reach a satisfactory resolution of a specific problem, an inspector from Labour Canada may be called in. This in my view is the most reasonable and economical way of ensuring safety and health in the workplace. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are already in effect in Canada a whole set of regulations aimed at protecting worker health and safety. There is also an excellent mechanism giving workers all the protection they are entitled to under the Act.

Let us now turn to the very issue of tobacco smoke in the workplace. This is an extremely complex issue. It is not just the case of an employer using a dangerous substance in his manufacturing process or of a manufacturing process emitting a dangerous substance against which workers should be well protected. Both the employers and the employees do smoke.

Bosses as well as workers are affected by secondary smoking. It is therefore not, Mr. Speaker, a matter of employer versus employees. It is not a technical problem either, and it is therefore not appropriate to look for a technical solution. According to the experts of the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of Labour Canada, trying to determine maximum levels of secondary smoking by measuring the concentration of some component or other might be very tricky. That approach is not recommended.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I doubt that we could have a smoke free environment just by imposing a regulation banning smoking, unless it were to be strictly and firmly enforced, particularly in federally regulated workplaces with a lot of public traffic. I am thinking of airports, stations, and the rest, where a whole army of inspectors would have to be hired to enforce the ban on smoking, and where the regulation would involve a lot of red tape. Surely this is not what the people of Canada want.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not want to give the impression that I think smoking is a harmless habit. There is irrefutable evidence that the smoker's health is affected. I also firmly believe that more and more Canadian citizens object to breathing an air which is polluted by other people's smoke. More and more of them are concerned and displeased with that situation.

While I sympathize with them, I do not think it advisable to regulate further. The solution does not lie in greater Government interference in the day to day lives of Canadians.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the answer must come from those directly affected, that is from the workers and the employers. That way it would be possible to find solutions suitable for each work environment.

Moreover, a local solution, devised by those most directly concerned by the problem, would be more likely to be favorably accepted than a solution imposed by a faceless bureaucracy in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly believe that this complex social problem must be solved on a voluntary basis, in a spirit of co-operation, by employers and employees.

It is my opinion that the problem of smoking in the workplace must be considered through health and safety committees, and this is precisely what Labour Canada is trying to do.

As I said earlier, we should not pass a measure which would in any way undermine the role of health and safety committees, even on a narrow question like this one.

[English]

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to address Bill C-204 presented by the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald). Essentially the Bill would regulate smoking in the federal workplace and on common carriers, as well as amend the Hazardous Products Act with regard to cigarette advertising. The Bill is timely and represents a concerted effort to try and come to grips with the problem of smoking in our society in those areas under federal jurisdiction.

The Hon. Member who just spoke essentially characterized the legislation as interventionist. He seemed to support a voluntary approach. With all due respect, that is a cop-out. It is the same as saying inaction is preferred over action.

In the 10 minutes that I am allotted this afternoon I would like to go into what the Bill purports to do and give you some statistics which would perhaps serve to disprove the theory that this legislation is interventionist. First, the Bill would mean that employers under federal jurisdiction have to provide a smoke-free environment. What is wrong with that? It would provide for designated smoking rooms for those individuals who do not smoke, who happen to be a majority in this country. It would also mean that there would be no smoking in common carriers under federal jurisdiction.

• (1720)

In the last week the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) suggested that as a start there should be no smoking on flights of less than two hours duration. Smoking is a health hazard in airplanes because of the compressed air, and is also a hazard to the aircraft itself. I think it will be only a matter of time before smoking is entirely eliminated on airplanes. We are also considering this option for ships, trains, and public transport road vehicles.

This Bill would change the Hazardous Products Act to ban the promotion and advertising of tobacco products although allowing the sale of them. The Bill is saying that those who choose to smoke know the risk and are responsible for their decision. However, it is completely absurd to try to promote smoking as a healthy and fun life style. That is misleading and