

Labour Conditions

W. G. Brayley, president of Johnson and Johnson, Ltd., is reported as having welcomed Bill C-126. In fact, he said, with regard to it: "It will help the economy by putting more disposal income in peoples' pockets".

When it comes to the setting of national standards, this is an area in which the federal government really, in my view, needs to do a great deal more than in the past. There is a continuing and growing need for a level of government to which people in this country can turn with respect to their needs and interests as Canadians, not just as citizens of Ontario, or of British Columbia, for example. Having regard to the relative smallness of our population and our open economy, and we must conduct our affairs in a way which will permit us to survive as a country in a world of common markets and free trade areas, and without decreasing and in fact with improvements in our standard of living. This means the existence of a national government capable of maintaining a strong internal market for our goods and services without it being hampered by provincial barriers—a government capable of co-ordinating the economy so as to provide the same basic standards and opportunities for all Canadians.

There are a number of ways in which the federal government can achieve these goals. One is by taking the lead in areas which are clearly within its jurisdiction and setting an example for the rest of the country to follow, as has been done in the case of the present bill. Another is the achievement of desired results through constant co-operation and consultation with the provinces. This is a course we certainly must follow. Nevertheless we cannot put aside the possibility of restructuring government activities even though this might mean the granting of more, rather than less responsibility to the federal government in certain areas of activity, whatever may be the case in others. We shall be obliged to recognize the changes which are taking place in the organization of industry and the countervailing changes in the organization of the labour movement itself. We must ask ourselves whether matters involving an entire industry operating on a nation-wide basis or even those of a large company with a number of plants spread across the various provinces can be effectively dealt with in the public interest within the restrictions of ten provincial boundaries. The same considerations apply to adjustment to technological change and adjustments to changes in trade patterns. The European countries we have to face in competition for markets have in

[Mr. Gray.]

at least one instance an economy-wide agreement between labour and management. In other instances they have industry-wide agreements, all of this obviously based on a system of government supervision of similar breadth.

There is no question that our economic growth to date justifies the minimum standards imposed by this legislation, standards which, I suggest, with the continued development of our economy, are just a beginning. I am pleased therefore to support this initiative of our federal government to give an example which will help create basic standards and opportunities for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, Bill No. C-126 concerns hours of work, minimum wages, annual vacations and holidays with pay in federal works, undertakings and businesses.

Evidently, it concerns the labourers employed by the federal government. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat (Mr. Gray) stated that 500,000 employees or more would be affected directly or indirectly by this legislative measure and that the whole nation, in his opinion, would benefit from it. As Bill No. C-126 will constitute an increase in purchasing power, it will stimulate the economy of our country. Mention has been made of hours of work, and some hon. members have suggested 40-hour, 36-hour and even 32-hour weeks; some have suggested a minimum hourly rate of \$1.25, while the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) suggested \$1.50 per hour.

After all those suggestions, a fact still remains: it was mentioned a while ago by a member of the New Democratic party, I believe, that automation, is bound to play, even in the federal administration, a predominant role, the importance of which will be ever increasing, and this means that some of the 500,000 federal employees will eventually be replaced by machines.

Whether they be I.B.M.s or new inventions, it is none the less true that those employees will be replaced by machines. That is the problem which we will have to face. This exists at present in private industry and does not concern the federal or provincial governments, but strikes break out in that field to protest against automation or the substitution of machines for men.

In my opinion, the time has come for the federal government to face the problem which at present exists in Canada and which becomes more serious every day, that is, man