

*Canada Labour Code*

advisable to ask for \$1.50, which would seem more reasonable in the present economic situation with regard to the wages paid generally in industry.

I feel that a significant fact should be taken into consideration. In the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, minimum wages of \$1.25 would not affect a great many people, since I can say that 99 per cent of organized workers in Quebec earn much more than \$1.25 an hour. At any rate, from a practical point of view this would not affect anybody.

On the other hand, in view of the situation prevailing in the maritimes, it will not be possible to apply this legislation in the same way, because it will cause problems and difficulties. That is why, discretion must be used.

The minister proposes \$1.25 an hour. I think this initial proposal should be accepted, unless the majority of the house feels that it would be advisable to do better, even if it is necessary to review it in a year or two, after the industry as such has adapted itself to those new basic regulations, since we must admit that, on the federal level, there has never been any clear legislation on hours of work, labour conditions, wages and other requirements. Therefore, if that is the first definite undertaking, I think we must be indulgent and understand that following the implementation of that new act a number of suggestions can be made by various organizations throughout the country. In the light of those suggestions, after the act has been in force for some time, we will be able then to judge what was of a temporary nature and what changes are necessary to meet actual needs.

However, something in this bill is a matter of concern. I note that many decisions are left to the minister's discretion under various clauses, namely certain conditions and hours of work in a given week. We must of course trust the administration; however, I think it would be better to put or write into the statute the conditions to be met by the company to benefit from, let us say, an exemption from a section of the act.

We see in clause 9 namely, that at the minister's discretion any concern upon an application might be exempted from that clause in particular. If I were mean I could suggest that this might allow a minister in particular to indulge in a certain amount of patronage, but I shall not do so on this occasion since the minister who holds that position at present is unbiased. Unfortunately, one must consider that he will not always hold this office.

[Mr. Lessard (Lake St. John).]

There is also something I should like to point out, that is the apparent consultation that could exist between the federal Department of Labour and that of the various provinces of Canada. I do not know whether there was consultation behind the scenes but, officially speaking, there does not seem to have been any. The Minister of Labour did not undertake the introduction of this bill without taking certain precautionary measures, as he is a realistic man. He must have had consultations with his colleagues in the various provinces in order to ascertain their views in regard to this proposal which he intends to have carried by the house.

It is interesting to note the objection that was raised by the trucking business throughout this country.

Naturally one wonders how much the trucking industry will be affected by this bill. Personally, I feel that very few truckers will come under it and even in their case, I doubt very much that they will be affected seriously enough for their business to suffer.

From my own observations most of the companies I consulted would not be seriously affected by this legislation because most of their business is carried on within the limits of the province where they operate. I think we should listen to their representation but, on the other hand, we should not systematically oppose this bill on the sole basis of the objections raised by certain truckers. I think the minister would be well advised to introduce amendments in order to meet the needs of the trucking business.

I believe the arguments raised were mostly concerned with working hours. Wages did not appear to be the main problem. It was working conditions that seemed most difficult and almost unapplicable.

And lastly, I feel sure the minister has some suggestions to make, and we will be very happy to listen to what he has to suggest in order to give satisfaction to all concerned.

There are, of course, other proposals in this bill. Another I find quite sound is the one providing work for the handicapped at a minimum wage lower than that prescribed by the legislation, after special authority has been granted. I understand the point of view of the minister, who wanted to allow the handicapped to have part time employment or to do light work, as they say in industry. I think the minister was considerate, since at the present time a number of persons affected by some disability can be assigned to a job,