

*Industrial Relations*

the years we have been here. Working conditions improve as the years go by and they improve because of the interest not only of labour organizations, which deserve a large share of the credit, but of legislators who interest themselves in the conditions under which the people of this country labour.

For all these reasons I propose to support this bill. I know that my support will be echoed by my leader, who is unavoidably absent at this time. I know that if he were here he would have some remarks to make on this legislation, because it would bring back to his mind the period when he was premier of Ontario and so keenly interested in the plight of the workers in his province, and the extent to which he promoted progressive labour legislation in that province.

**Hon. Milton F. Gregg (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I have read this bill with great interest, and again it indicates the well known diligence of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. He stated in his remarks that he believed this was the first round in so far as the federal ring is concerned, and I think that is true.

Both he and the hon. member for Hamilton West referred to the fact that in the earlier part of this century vacations with pay was a matter which did not receive anything like the consideration and interest which has developed since the end of the last great war. Certainly there were vacations, but too often they were vacations without pay or without any sign of employment to call a halt to the vacation. It was those long series of forced unpaid vacations which led the federal government to request that the British North America Act be amended in order that there might be something in the way of a backlog during these unpaid vacations which would offset the hardship imposed.

I do not think anyone will disagree with the principle that all who toil hard and consistently are entitled to vacations, and that if conditions warrant those vacations should be paid for. At the same time I think all of us should realize that paid vacations must be related to many other factors which enter into arrangements between employer and employee. For instance, there is the number of statutory holidays to be allowed and the number to be paid for, there is the length of the working week and how many days in the week are to be paid for, there is the amount of overtime to be worked and the payment for same, and half a dozen other factors that could be listed.

As I said, Bill No. 211 brings before the house for the first time some interesting questions for debate. I hope the debate will be full because I am sure it will be profitable.

The bill proposes that all employees in Canada who come under federal labour jurisdiction shall be granted at least two weeks' holidays with pay after one full year of employment.

For a number of years before the last war we had legislation providing for the settlement of disputes in industries under federal jurisdiction, and since 1948 we have had the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act which replaced the former legislation. That act covered the regulation of some collective bargaining aspects of labour relations as well as dealing with the all-important matter of providing the means or technique for the settlement of labour disputes.

Since I became Minister of Labour in 1953 we have brought in two additional measures. One was the Canada Fair Employment Practices Act, which prohibits discrimination in employment because of race, colour, national origin, religion or creed. At this session there is to be introduced legislation to provide equal pay for female employees as compared with male employees. But I think Bill No. 211 differs from those two measures in that it proposes to set a specific minimum standard in respect to one aspect of working conditions, namely annual vacations with pay. That fact makes it somewhat different from the legislation I have mentioned.

Federal industries are of course those works, businesses and undertakings which come under federal jurisdiction, and in spelling these out in the act my hon. friend has very kindly used the language of the Canada Fair Employment Practices Act.

**Mr. Knowles:** If you will just take the rest of the bill as well that will be fine.

**Mr. Gregg:** The validity of the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act, which is applicable to the federal industries listed in the bill, came before the Supreme Court of Canada only last year and was upheld in a judgment given on June 28, 1955. Perhaps I should run over the industries listed in order to make the record complete. They include transportation and communications, including railways, shipping and stevedoring; air transport; international trucking and bus lines; telegraphs; telephones in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia; broadcasting; terminal elevators and the processing of western grain; banks, and grain companies.

The total number of employees in these industries is just under 400,000, which is not a large proportion of the roughly 5,000,000 paid workers we have in Canada. As federal Minister of Labour I recall that figure from time to time with a great deal of satisfaction, because within 400,000 workers there cannot be nearly as many labour disputes as might be involved in the several million workers.