

Supply—Labour

• (3:50 p.m.)

On the other hand, if you look at section 92 and read paragraph 13, to which reference is made so often, regarding provincial jurisdiction over property and civil rights, the other side of the argument is revealed, namely that the provinces have a prior right in the labour field. Here again, I would remind the house that in paragraph 13 of section 92 the emphasis is on property, and civil rights is tacked on as an incidental item. I am inclined to agree with those who suggest that we need constitutional amendments, but I feel that the constitutional change which is perhaps of paramount importance will involve the re-writing of the constitution so as to put emphasis on such matters as labour relations.

In his statement, the minister made some reference to the work being done by his department in the field of human rights through such agencies as the I.L.O. I certainly agree with the minister that we have some very competent and, if I may say so without sounding condescending, well meaning people working in these fields in his department and in other branches of the government. I am not trying to downgrade the approach that is being taken by such bodies as the I.L.O. to raising the living standards and carrying on the process of education of people around the world, particularly with respect to the rights of individuals. However, this is a long and slow process. I suggest that it should not only be undertaken under the auspices of the I.L.O. but that the Canadian government or the Canadian parliament should come to grips with it much more directly through some immediate action rather than by perpetuating the process of setting up commissions and task forces ad nauseam.

The remarks which the minister made with regard to the reorganization of his department and the mobilization of competent people in the three divisions which he enumerated were very interesting, but the administrative machinery and its improvement is not of such great importance. What we need in this parliament now are proposals which would give a real sense of direction to the people he has in his department and to those he said he will mobilize. It is not enough to have people making studies about studies about studies. It is not enough to have an administrative force at work administrating acts with regard to the protection of the labour force, which have not yet been applied to the full extent.

What some of us would like to hear from the minister before the estimates are passed is

a clearcut statement on the legislative proposals which he intends to place before parliament before this session is concluded. We want to know whether the minister and the government intend to bring forward legislation in the field of industrial relations and unemployment insurance, and an implementation of the principles enunciated in the Freedman report. In our view, these matters have been under study for quite long enough to permit the minister to make up his mind. We would like to know on which side of the fence the government proposes to sit, whether on the side of human rights or on the side of property, or will it try to straddle the fence as has been done so often by previous Liberal governments? These are the kinds of questions to which we want answers when dealing with these estimates. We do not expect the minister to say that starting on Monday morning he will bring forward these measures, but we would like to know what proposals the government intends to put forward when parliament reassembles in the fall. I do not know whether or not the Minister of Labour can answer all the questions concerning priorities. However, we had hoped that before the minister was asked to come before the house with his estimates he would have had some clearcut indication and direction from the Prime Minister or the house leader with regard to their intentions concerning this legislation.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairman, I understand I have the floor at this time but I am prepared to yield to the hon. member for Oxford as I believe he is catching an earlier plane than I am. If it is agreeable to the house, I will yield to the hon. member for Oxford and speak after he has completed his remarks.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Chairman, first of all I wish to thank my friend, the hon. member for York-Humber, for his courtesy in this regard, although I do not think it was necessary. I do not believe either of us will speak at any great length, but I thank him very much and I appreciate his courtesy.

It was my understanding earlier today that the minister intended to deal first with the estimates of the Department of Labour, then with the Unemployment Insurance Commission, followed by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I think we would all agree with the logic of this approach. I