

Supply—Labour

dominion voluntarily undertakes to meet standards appearing in provincial legislation and regulation, the provincial authorities acquire no status to enforce these standards; therefore correspondence on the subject should be addressed to the dominion department concerned.

Yours very truly,

Charles E. Greenlay,
Minister of Labour

I recognize the constitutional position implied in that letter, but it seems to me that, in view of the fact we have reached the stage where we have fair wage provisions, the federal government should lean over backwards to see to it not only that such provisions are lived up to but that the rights accorded to workers in the provinces are fully enjoyed when they are engaged on federal projects. This has to do with work under the Department of National Defence. Surely it is the job of the Minister of Labour to try to persuade his colleagues, the heads of the other departments, to go the whole way in seeing to it that provincial rights accorded to labour are met when people are working on federal projects.

The particular matter in hand was the implementation of the Manitoba Vacations with Pay Act. Since it has been said today that the minister has not so much to do these days, I urge him to interest himself in the matter, and to try to get provincial rights accepted without question and recognized on all federal projects.

Mr. Mitchell: I should like to point out to my friend that I have plenty to do. It is a misstatement of fact that I have not much to do.

Mr. Knowles: I merely had in mind the fact that it was said several times to the minister this morning that he was not having as difficult a time as he had a few years ago.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): He said he had been lazy in the last year.

Mr. Knowles: I thought it would be a good idea to keep him on his toes. I turn now to a matter concerning which I have had correspondence with the Minister of Labour. It grew out of my receiving from the president of the Winnipeg and district trades and labour council, Mr. Andrew Murphy, a copy of a letter which he wrote to the Minister of Labour on October 24. It is a long one so I will summarize it. The burden of the letter was that certain government bus contracts had been withdrawn from a union shop in Winnipeg with which contracts had been placed during the war years, and they were being given to a non-union shop in the same city. Mr. Murphy asked the minister to use his good offices to see that dominion government contracts were placed with union shops

paying good wages rather than with non-union shops. I wrote the minister on October 26 endorsing the representations made by Mr. Murphy, and had a reply from the minister dated October 29 in which he said:

Dear Mr. Knowles:

In reply to your letter of October 26, I would say that I have heard from Mr. Murphy on the subject matter of your letter and have acknowledged his letter and expressed my thanks for the trouble he has gone to in putting the matter before me.

I wish to also thank you. Of course you will realize that the matter does not come within the purview of my department. Nevertheless, having your views will be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Humphrey Mitchell

As the minister will realize, that letter did not tell me very much. I felt that at least he could have found out which department of government had placed these contracts, and I had dared hope he might go still further and try to persuade whatever department it was to continue to place contracts with the union shops concerned, as they had been placed during the war. So I wrote the minister again on November 2, in reply to his letter of October 29, asking this question:

Could you advise me which department it is that has placed these contracts?

The minister wrote me in reply on November 5:

Dear Mr. Knowles:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of the second instant with further reference to representations made by the president of Winnipeg and district trades and labour council concerning a government contract placed with an automobile and truck body plant in Winnipeg.

I am sorry that I am unable to inform you as to the department of government which has placed the contract in question. This department receives information as to the number and aggregate value of contracts for supplies and equipment awarded by the Canadian Commercial Corporation, post office, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, etc., which are subject to the government's fair wages policy in respect of such work. However, these reports do not contain any breakdown showing the exact type of contract or information as to the recipient firm which would enable us to identify individual contracts.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Humphrey Mitchell

I must say, Mr. Chairman, that I was disappointed and in fact annoyed that the minister, having had this matter brought to his attention and being the minister who should be interested in taking steps to see that the government's fair wage policy is lived up to, could not find out for me even after three letters, one from the president of the Winnipeg and district trades and labour council and two from me, which department had placed these contracts. It so happens that the letter I just read mentions the very corporation that did place the