

Canada Labour Code

and no jobs, middle-aged workers who perhaps are only forty years old but have been unemployed and fear that they will never be employed again, or older workers who recognize that they have much left to give from their experience.

Will there be places in our labour force for these people? How will we adapt our workplace? These are issues for which leadership should be coming from the Minister and the Government. However, it is that failed government and failed leadership that have resulted in our current unemployment levels and the desperation that exists in the labour force of Canada. That desperation has not been addressed by this legislation and has not been addressed in Parliament.

I do not want to delay the House for long today because I want to move this Bill to committee where we can hold hearings. I appreciate that the Bill has been brought forward by the Government but I wish that it had been brought forward sooner. Of course, we will deal with it now as best we can and in a manner that is just, equitable and fair to Canadians and the Canadian workplace.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, in opening debate on Bill C-34 on behalf of the NDP, let me reiterate what we have said a number of times in the House. We are in favour of the passage of this legislation prior to the June recess for two obvious reasons. First, there is no guarantee that we will be back after the June recess.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: With NDP, I can believe that.

Mr. Blenkarn: The NDP will not be back.

Mr. Murphy: I can understand the humour that certain Conservative spokesmen feel toward this labour legislation but it is a very serious piece of legislation to us.

Mr. Blenkarn: It's you.

Mr. Murphy: While the jackal to my right continues to heckle, I will continue with my serious speech.

As I was saying, the passage of this important legislation is necessary because it will protect workers' health and safety. It will protect the lives of workers in Canada. We recognize that with less than three weeks before the June adjournment, with every possibility of an election either this summer or fall, this legislation must pass in the next two and a half weeks.

The offer that has been stated a number of times by our House Leader, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), is that we would deal with this legislation at second reading in one day. We would refer the matter to committee for extensive study, with public presentations from management and labour, but we would guarantee the legislation coming back to this House for final disposition before the adjournment on June 29. That is the essence of the House order. It allows for public participation, amendments and discussion. It guarantees that this House will deal with this important legislation. I again ask members of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party to stand up in this House

and say that they will guarantee that this legislation will pass prior to the June recess.

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As I said earlier, this legislation deals with health and safety. It deals with people's lives. For the last four years Canadian labour spokesmen and workers have been waiting for this legislation. It is unfortunate that we are dealing with it on June 11, 1984. This legislation should have been introduced over a year ago. We should have had time for extensive study, discussion, and extensive work on improving the legislation. Sadly, that is not the situation. By dealing with this Bill on June 11 we are forced into a situation of dealing with it quickly or not dealing with it at all.

The Conservative member who just spoke talked about all sorts of discussion, about the need for jobs, the problems of youth and the need to be concerned about work stoppages. I heard also from the Conservative spokesman about the need to improve productivity in Canada. Those are all valid concerns but they should not be used to prevent the passage of legislation which is so essential to Canadian workers.

I would be the first to admit that the proposed legislation is not perfect. Later on I will discuss some of the problems that exist in the legislation. I would also be the first to say that there are amendments which must be made to improve this legislation. Again, I will deal with that later on. There are, however, some improvements in this legislation. There are some guarantees in this Bill which will protect the lives, the health and safety of Canadians. That is very important, Mr. Speaker. This House for political reasons or for reasons of various special interest groups should not delay passing it.

One of the improvements that we see, and it is a minor amendment to the Labour Code, is that from now on handicapped people will not be subject to less than the minimum wage. The all-Party task force on the disabled many years ago reported to this House and asked for that change to be made. The Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), our spokesman on that all-Party task force, has often risen in this House to ask for that change. We believe it is a change that reflects both the necessity of handicapped people to earn a reasonable income and it also reflects the fact that there should be justice for all in our society. To allow the disabled to be paid less than the minimum wage is an act of injustice. I am glad to see that improvement in this Bill.

I am also glad to see the improvements for child care for both the mother and adoptive parents in this Bill. Those are social needs for which we have waited some time. Again, I hope that House will be in a position to act before the summer recess to ensure those improvements become part of Canadian law.

We are also pleased to see the amendments which would bring the Public Service of Canada under the federal Labour Code. We find it ironic that Liberal and Conservative Governments in the past have excluded federal Government employees from the protections of the Labour Code. Spokesmen for various Liberal and Conservative Governments have