

Industrial Relations

study and as much perusal as possible of concurrent legislation, with a full understanding and desire that it will be carried out—

Mr. Pickersgill: May I ask the hon. member a question? I am sure it will come as a great relief to him.

Mr. Pallett: The hon. member asks questions of everyone else, so I do not know why he should not ask one of me.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am sure this will come as a great relief to him, because he is having a pretty hard struggle to keep going. The question I was going to ask him was how much careful study was made before the first version of his government's agricultural prices bill, how much study before the second version, how much study before the third version, and how soon do they think it will be before they have a fourth version?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not sure that the question relates to the principle under discussion, but in any event I must interrupt the hon. member to tell him his time has expired.

Mr. J. C. Van Horne (Restigouche-Madawaska): It is a pleasure for me to state very frankly, Mr. Speaker, that this bill is a very long overdue measure which should have been introduced in this house a good many years ago.

I would like to take very briefly the position in one industry, the paper industry, because it is with that industry that I am most concerned within my own riding. The lack of a minimum wage law affects many thousands of people in my riding in a very adverse way. What happens with these pulp mills, of course, is that where the unions are strong and where employees are in unions they are in a position to obtain fair minimum wages, at least generally speaking. However, where our people are being exploited is where they are engaged in secondary industries, and the difficulty is that it is almost impossible to unionize and get together.

As the price of paper goes up, for instance, I have found in my riding that the prices the farmers receive for their pulpwood goes down and down, and it might be reasonably ascertained that the person who is being punished is the fellow who is not in a position to appeal to a union to press for reasonable wages. For 22 years the former government sat by indifferently and lazily, neglecting to introduce a fair minimum wage act. This has been a growing problem in this country for a good many years, and I can well remember former government members going down to my riding during election time and promising these minimum wage acts, but this is the first time I have had a chance to speak on this

[Mr. Pallett.]

subject. I congratulate the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre for bringing this bill before the house at this time.

Right at this time in my own riding the C.N.R., for instance, is paying 70 cents an hour for snow shovellers while the C.P.R., right across on the next track, is paying something like \$1.15 or \$1.20 an hour. We find all through the story that it is precisely those men who are most in need of this type of protection who are expected to work for wages which are far below what might be considered necessary in order to maintain a reasonable standard of living.

I must also congratulate the government of the province of New Brunswick which, since 1952, has introduced a minimum wage act of its own. This has gone a long way toward alleviating the injustices which were perpetrated against employees in my province. Of course, so far as I can find out Liberal policies have always been against minimum wages, and it is most unfortunate that we have had to wait until this late in the day to have occasion to approve this measure.

I wish to make just one more point; that it will be found as the result of a minimum of inquiry that this bill will do no more than provide the merest form of justice to employees. The bill possibly does not go far enough, but it would be a great step forward and I sincerely urge the acceptance of this bill by the house.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): In principle, Mr. Speaker, I am in agreement with the bill now put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. It has long been recognized and believed that a minimum wage for employees in general is required. Of course we have to accept the fact in this particular instance that the bill relates only to federal employees, and those people in allied services. As has been said, in this house we cannot attempt to legislate an over-all minimum wage act, but certainly in a situation of this kind the government of Canada should take the lead and so far as it is within the legislative authority of the parliament of Canada such a minimum wage act should be brought in.

Having said these few words on the general principle of the bill, I would like to discuss in detail some of the principles as they are found in individual clauses. The first clause to which I wish to refer is clause 3 of the bill, which is the application of the bill to employees. This seems to be the customary type of clause which has been put in other acts, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has pointed out. I find the same provision and the same application in other bills which have been put forward