

MAY CHANGE WORKERS ACT

May Be Allowed Three Years
to Establish Claim for
Silicosis Injury

REFEREE PROVIDED

A bill to amend the Workmen's Compensation Act, to extend from two years to three the time in which a workman may establish a claim for silicosis injury, was introduced in the Legislature yesterday by Attorney-General Roebuck.

After some experimenting with the three-year period, the Workmen's Compensation Board may recommend still greater extensions of time, the Attorney-General said.

Another amendment to the act provided that the board be empowered to take a given case before a qualified medical practitioner before a court, or, in other words, to place a case before a medical referee.

Three bills were introduced by Hon. David A. Croll. One would establish permissive legislation which would give Ontario municipalities the right to set up pension schemes for its employees. It is the first legislation of its kind in the Province.

Another bill would amend the Apprenticeship Act to improve trade schools under the Department of Labor. Mr. Croll charged girls were paying \$50 or \$60 to learn hairdressing, but at the end of their course were not suitably trained.

The other bill was entitled the Operating Engineers' Act, 1937, and was virtually the same as the old act. Some changes were made to take in new machinery and refrigeration plants.

Unfair Employer Sets Wage Level, Croll Tells House

Industry Cannot Be Trusted
Not to Exploit Workers,
Declares Minister as Mini-
mum Wage Bill Gets Sec-
ond Reading

DEPARTMENT CHANGES

Industry cannot be trusted not to exploit its workers, Hon. David A. Croll, Minister of Labor and Public Welfare, yesterday told the Legislature as second reading was given his bill to establish minimum wages for men in Ontario.

The wages of working men were not established by the average employer who was a fair and humane man, anxious to look after the welfare of his employees, but were established by a small minority of men without a conscience who drove wages to subsistence levels, he declared, thus forcing the fair employer to cut his cost sheet or go out of business.

Would Preserve Peace.

"The bill before the House is a vitally important one to the industrial life of Ontario," continued Mr. Croll. "It is the foundation on which we hope to erect what is virtually a new Department of Labor. With the other labor bills it will inaugurate a plan which we believe will make for greater peace in industry and greater security for some 600,000 Ontario working men and women."

For a Government to be inactive in the labor and industrial situation which presented itself today, he said, would be "the worst betrayal of the Province's interests."

"Mr. Speaker, we have no intention of being guilty of such betrayal. The situation must be faced honestly and the solution courageously applied.

"During a readjustment period, the greatest function of Government is the preservation of peace in industry. This it can do only through assurances of decent wages and working conditions, the prevention of exploitation or, in the last analysis, through mediation in a strike. Let us be frank: It can preserve peace only by seeing to it that men get their wages that enable them to feed their families, clothe them, live in a decent house, and call in the doctor when he's needed. It can preserve peace only by interfering in private industry because the mass of the people who toil are exploited.

Sees Brutal Opinions.

"You will hear plenty of contrary argument. You will hear it said that industry and business should be allowed to go ahead without interference; you will hear that wages will find their own natural level. Mr. Speaker, such brutal opinions demand a brutal reply. The man who expresses them either has his tongue in his cheek or else he is mired in ignorance.

"Why can't we approach this subject on the basis of fact and not of prejudice? If we do so, we must ask this question: Can industry be trusted not to exploit its workers, not to underpay them, not to overwork them?"

"That is a difficult question. The average employer is a fair man, a humane one, anxious to pay his people decently, concerned for their welfare. But the average employer does not establish the wages of a competitive industry. They are determined by the operations of a minority, men without consciences, men who will drive the wage level down, down until it's not much better than the relief allowances of the average-sized family. In self-defense the decent majority has to drop the scale, with the best intentions in the world. They can't compete until they reduce the labor item of their cost-sheet. For that precise reason I feel justified in saying that industry can't be trusted not to exploit its workers."

Russell Nesbitt (Cons., Toronto-Bracondale) objected to the appointment of three members of the Department of Labor staff to the proposed Labor and Industry Board. He charged the board would thus reflect "only its master's voice." The Conservative was peppered with barbed criticism from Mr. Croll, Hon. Harry Nixon and Fred Avery (Lib., St. Catharines).

64,000 Skilled Workers Now Operate Under Codes

Sixty-four thousand skilled workmen in Ontario are working under codes established by the authority of the Industrial Standards Act, Hon. David A. Croll, Minister of Labor and Public Welfare, revealed in the Legislature yesterday. In addition, he said, there were 124 new applications for codes being considered by his department.

There was no intention on the part of the Government of altering the act in any way, except perhaps to strengthen it, he declared. No industry operating under a code had ever had a strike, but last week one thousand furniture workers struck because they did not have a code. An agreement had been signed under the act and the men had gone peaceably back to work, he said.