

HOUR TO BANK LAW

to be introduced by Cushing on Wednesday in interests of province.

on the order paper of to be considered this bill, together with an Act, which comes into force on Friday, therefore labor legislation, moved with interest by

bank-to-bank law, effect workmen in all province, is naturally, of course, to the southern province, where so situated. The first station came from the

new Alberta Legislature, which is in the position of a third party, in this sense have been

family advocated since, Cushing, Mr. Simms, Mr. Fisher and Mr. Mar-

to come into force 1900, is a comprehensive provisions, a not go below, the for the purpose of

ent or manager of fix for each shift of a mine the time at the

to be completed, that every workman opportunity of return-

Further, in several of the countries of Europe, the mine owners have sought permission to reduce the time

in "workman" means employed in a mine, he is not an official, or an on-setter, horse-

to be kept by the mine for the purpose of the act, and being

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INTEREST MARKS BOTH DEBATES

Continued from page three.

descent to the beginning of the ascent. The law provides that persons at work where the temperature exceeds 86 degrees Fahrenheit or where very great inconvenience is suffered from water should not remain below longer than six hours a day.

In Belgium a commission was appointed last year to enquire into this subject and their report is being awaited with considerable interest.

In the United States of America established constitutional difficulty has made it difficult to regulate the hours of labor. In endeavoring to frame such laws the state legislatures of the United States are confronted by the impossibility of reconciling such laws with the provisions of the constitution which prohibit them from doing anything to impair the right of individuals to make contracts. Laws in this sense have therefore been declared unconstitutional except in two cases—

(1) Where a state or the federal congress has legally limited the hours of labor on work done for the government, which is in such cases in the position of master and a third party does not intervene to disturb the making of a lawful contract;

(2) Where the work is done under unhealthy conditions, in which case the federal government, under the "police powers" conferred on it by the constitution, can, in the interests of public health, compel or sanction the enforcement of measures to protect it.

Difficulties Across Border. The Supreme court of the United States has asserted the right of the federal authorities to enforce the limitation of hours of labor in certain mines where poisonous fumes arise, but has refused to include coal mines in the same category, so that the legal limitation of hours in coal mines in the United States would appear to be impossible.

As a matter of fact the eight hour day is in force in the coal mines over a large part of the United States, and more than half of the bituminous coal produced in the United States is in the same category, so that the legal limitation of hours in coal mines in the United States would appear to be impossible.

Further, in several of the countries of Europe, the mine owners have sought permission to reduce the time occupied in working the men by increasing the number riding in the cage, and increasing the speed in the shaft, and the mining authority as far as possible acceded to their requests. In many cases at collieries where a considerable proportion of the men had long distances to travel underground to their working places, new shafts have been sunk, specifically for the purpose of shortening the distance traveled.

The mining act of New Zealand (1896) declared that no man or boy shall be employed over eight hours a week, nor more than eight hours a day, except in case of an emergency, no female is to be employed at all.

The Coal Mines act of 1901 made a week's work of eight hours and an act of 1901 says that the miner shall not be employed underground for any longer period in any day than eight hours.

The British Columbia act was assented to February 10th, 1904. It was fixed to come into force on the first day of June, 1905, it enacted that no person shall be employed underground in any coal mine for more than eight hours from bank to bank in every twenty-four hours.

Existing Conditions in Alberta. It has been suggested, of course over and over again, that restriction of the hours of labor might be obtained either by the voluntary action of the employers or by the efforts of the trade unions. Indeed, by the latter means this province in one or two small mines eight hours has been granted by the majority of the employers. It has been fixed by agreement between the operators and the unions.

On the other hand the unions have seldom been able to fix the same hour all over the province so as to put the miners all upon the same footing. The result being that the hours of labor in the mines of this province vary considerably, and I think it safe to say that we may reject voluntary concession as utopian. The efforts of trade unions on the other hand has proved itself to be expensive not only to the men employed and to the employers, but to the consumers of the province, as witness in the appalling strikes that in the past have been found necessary to bring the owners and men to an agreement. I think it is well within the mark to say that practically all advocates of the eight hour days in the province of Alberta are in favor of obtaining it by law. It is certainly desirable that there should be general uniformity.

Evidence Before Commission. An illustration of the effect of this lack of uniformity came out in the investigation carried on by the Alberta coal commission, the facts of which are as follows—

Mr. Charlton Dixon, manager of the Canada West Coal and Coke company, of Taber, favored a uniform system. This mine employs 130 men underground and 22 men above and it has a daily output of 250 tons. The hours of this mine are set by agreement and are eight hours at the face with half an hour for dinner.

Mr. Dixon was asked for suggestions by the Hon. Chief Justice Sifton, chairman of the coal commission, and he replied: "We cannot afford to work under present conditions. For the eight hours of work we pay higher wages than our biggest competitor. We pay for the coal as much as the best rate while our competitor pays for it as severed. With a handicap of two hours and a loss of wages it is going to be such that it will be prohibitive for us. In the selling of our coal we cannot buck up against a place that has a developed mine, that has a pretty good output in the way of ma-

shiners, and allow them to work two hours more every day and pay less than we do." He had in mind the Lethbridge mine.

By the Chief Justice—
Q.—That would be an argument in favor of making a legal day in every mine?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Suppose the law were put in such shape that each mine in this province should be run the same number of hours, would that place you in a more satisfactory condition?

A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—Regardless of what the hours were?

A.—Yes. Just make them all alike. Put us all on the same basis.

Q.—You think that would be satisfactory?

A.—Yes.

It therefore seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we are not going too far in legislation when we are granting to the miners of Alberta by legislation the same advantages that have been granted in France, Austria, Holland, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Columbia and in view of the proposed legislation in Great Britain.

He Considers Employers. Now, with regard to the employers, the operators of this province claim that an eight hour day from bank to bank will reduce the output by ten per cent. Experience, however, does not show that such has been the case, as the following examples will show.

In 1901 the number of persons employed below and above ground in Austria were 59,581 and 22,475,000 tons of lignite were produced. In 1902, 53,159 persons were employed and the production was 22,692,076 tons. Thus while the number of persons employed had decreased by 12 per cent, the output increased by 218,567 tons.

In 1872 the output of an act in England for eleven and twelve hours, at that time there was a great outcry respecting any reduction. Petitions were made to the British parliament stating that the industry would be ruined if there were any alterations in the number of hours. The hours were not reduced, but yet the output of coal today is larger than in the days when the hours were longest.

In this connection I may say that the imperial coal commission in their report last year stated: "We cannot but conclude that an hour's work of the men employed in East and West Scotland, Northumberland and Durham, where the hours are shortest, is more effective than in the Lancashire and South Wales, where the hours are longest."

Early Legislation. An eight hour day was established by agreement in some of the South Yorkshire mines about 1859. In 1869 the general secretary to the Master association stated as "a fact that cannot be disputed, that the production of the coal mines in the United Kingdom has been introduced into the South Yorkshire district, is greatly in excess of the production of the other districts. The number of men when the men were twelve or thirteen hours." He went on to attribute this to the greater energy and steadiness with which the men worked on the shorter shift. This statement is found in the report of the Social Science Association on trade strikes, 1869, page 45.

There was a time not long distant in England when the employment of women in the work of the mines was before the imperial parliament, and at that time the miners (many of them baronets) showed some interest as to whether the reform then proposed would reduce the production of the coal mines.

Further, an eight hour day at bank would not make any perceptible difference in the Edmonton or Taber districts as the faces of the mines are not a long way from the mouth of the shafts or from the mouth of the mines in slopes, as the men take an hour in the middle of the day for dinner and come "git out of winding, but at present all the coal the mine must take their meals and wind up. At some of the mines in these districts as the workings get older and further from the shaft, it might be brought into greater use for winding, but at present all the coal the mine must take their meals and wind up.

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ple or the employer, or for an improved attendance by the workmen resulting from the greater time they would have in which to renew their physical powers. No account was taken of the more efficient maintenance of the haulage and roadways or of the increased output likely to result from the human factors that were brought into the problem.

Mr. Speaker, can it be seriously contended that in the face of such results flowing from modern appliances, mechanical inventions, and the general bracing up of efficiency in the mines, the same necessity existed for working long hours? On humanitarian grounds alone there is an overwhelming case, not merely for the sympathetic consideration of this measure by the House, but for the absolute approval of the measure unanimously by the legislature and the country.

Forecast of Results Here. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the facts in relation to the output of coal in the province of Alberta I think we need not be seriously alarmed. There will be any decrease in the output by this legislation. The facts are as follows—

The number of mines opened in 1903 were 22
Number of mines in operation in 1903 were 75
Number of mines abandoned in 1903 were 8
Number of persons employed inside the mines 2000
Number of persons employed outside the mines 2000
Total number of persons employed 4000
Number of new mines opened in 1906 were 10
Number of mines in operation in 1906 were 61
Number of mines abandoned in 1906 were 2
Number of persons employed inside the mines 2000
Number of persons employed outside the mines 2000
Total persons employed 4000
In 1901 the output in tons for the North-West Territories (Alberta and Saskatchewan) was 4,940,240
In 1902 the output was 5,106,774
In 1903 the output was 5,222,030
In 1904 the output was 5,782,931
In 1905 the output was 6,125,225
In 1906 the output was 6,185,000

It will be seen from these figures that there has been a very steady increase, the output for the year 1906 being nearly 200 per cent. more than 1901, and the production for the year 1906 being over 70 per cent. more than that of 1905, in spite of the fact that the number of individuals employed was the same in the year 1906 as in the year 1901.

The total returns for the year 1907 have not yet been received, but I have no reason to believe that they will have an increase of 400,000 tons in the coal production of last year.

A Remarkable Showing. From these figures it is seen that the members will note that this is an exceptional showing for 1906, and the output would have been much less if the coal production of last year.

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portion of accidents was one for every 300 tons of coal taken or more than double the number of accidents in Durham where the shorter hours were worked. If the long hours continued to safety we would expect to find a greater degree of safety where the long hours obtained than where shorter hours were worked. As a matter of fact we find the greater ratio of the long hours obtained than where shorter hours were worked.

Case of Consumer. I now come to the question of the consumer. We are told that it will increase the cost of the coal. Then the Workmen's Compensation for Injuries bill was before the imperial house it was said that the cost of production would be increased by three per cent or more per ton, but in practice it had not increased the cost of coal one penny per ton. Therefore, hon. members of this legislature should be wary in accepting that plea as an excuse for not doing their duty.

The bill now under discussion, as the same discount might be made in their statement in the House. The miners have no desire to add to the cost of production, because that is a very serious matter for the workman as the employer, but there is one thing on which there could be no compromise and that was the question of the cost of coal. It is a question which ought to be considered in a category entirely apart from the cost of production. The cost of coal will largely depend on the demand.

The Act before the House provides that a workman shall not be below ground in a mine for the purpose of his work and of going to and from his work for that purpose for more than eight hours during any consecutive twenty-four hours.

Provided the question of an eight hour day for miners, it is important to bear in mind that a coal mine is not like a factory where all the work is done in one place ready to be taken out at approximately the same time and cease at a given time.

Hours in Mine. The subsection (3) of section 2 of this bill we have made no calculation upon the basis of an individual average eight hour day—for instance, a workman who works eight hours will require to be up at 2.30 p.m. The last man to go down at 7.30 p.m. would need to be up at three. The first man to go down at 7.30 p.m. would need to be up at three. The first man to go down at 7.30 p.m. would need to be up at three.

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