

not being carried out, the department which is responsible for the work shall be notified and be given the opportunity of looking into the matter; and I say, without fear of contradiction, that during the 8 years that I was deputy minister of the department and the short time that I have been privileged to be the Minister of the Department, no case has been brought to the attention of the department of alleged non-observance of this resolution which has not yet been fairly and fully investigated. I would ask hon. gentlemen to look at the annual report of the Department of Labour as presented to this House, in which, at page 132, they will find a statistical table of fair wage schedules prepared by the Department of Labour for departments of the government during the period from July, 1900, to March, 1907, inclusive. In that table they will find that the Department of Labour prepared during that period a total of 1,477 fair-wage schedules which have been inserted in contracts awarded by this government from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The total number prepared altogether is much larger than this. These schedules have not only been inserted in the contracts, but have been published in the 'Labour Gazette', so that the workmen on whose behalf they have been inserted in the contracts would have an opportunity of seeing them and making sure that they were being paid the rates of wages specified. There have been some cases of contractors failing to pay the rates of wages which the schedules call for, and in all such cases which has been brought to the attention of the department the contractors have been obliged to pay the difference to the men. The difference has been deducted in the first instance by the department which awarded the contract, and has been paid to the men. So that the government has not been neglectful of the purpose which the hon. mover of this Bill has in mind. But to take the step which he suggests is to go a good way beyond what up to the present time has been thought by this House to be advisable.

The Bill as introduced suggests no regard for existing conditions in any industry unless those conditions happen to be such that the eight hour day is already in force. Before a step of the kind proposed is taken, I think it would be well for this House to be fully informed as to its effect. I fear that if this Bill were passed in its present form, it would give rise to a good many serious complications. The hon. member for North Grey asked the hon. mover of the Bill whether in cases in which workmen were to-day working 10 hours for a certain wage, if this Bill became law, they would be prepared to work eight hours for eight hours pay or would want 10 hours pay for eight hours work. The reply of the hon. mover of the Bill was that it was

up to the employer to say what he would pay and up to the men to see what they could get. I do not agree with my hon. friend. It is up to this House to tell all parties concerned what an Act of this kind means when it is on the statute-book, and to leave no doubts in any man's mind as to what his privileges or his restrictions are under it. For that reason, if for no other, I think it is desirable that the House should have fuller information than it has at present on a measure which is likely to give rise to such serious complications. In the building trade there are a large number of men who have agreements with their employers. These agreements have been the result of negotiations during a long series of years. They have been effected in many instances, only after serious strikes or lock-outs, and they represent understandings between the employers and the men as to the conditions of employment. Some of these agreements are for three years, some for five years and some for other terms, and it seems to me that the effect of this measure upon agreements of that kind is another feature which should receive our most serious attention before we take any final action. If, for instance, one of its effects would be that contractors would say to their workmen: We do not wish to enter into an agreement with you, because we may have to change its terms in virtue of this legislation—if that would be one of its effects, it would be most unfortunate indeed. I do not say that such a consequence would necessarily follow, but I think that, on behalf of the workmen themselves, that contingency should be clearly understood.

It seems to me desirable also that this House should know the extent to which the eight hour or nine hour or ten hour day is already in existence in different parts of the country. I have here a document which contains a mass of information on that subject, prepared by one of the fair wage officers of the Department of Labour. It gives a record of the hours of labour in the building trades and the different other trades in Canada; and I find that in almost every part of the country, there is a difference in the hours of labour, as compared with other localities, depending largely on the circumstances of the locality or of the particular province in which the work is being carried on. In some cases these differences are the result of climatic or other considerations. In some districts men work a shorter day because they can work the whole year round, and in others they work a longer day because they have not the same opportunity throughout the whole year to carry on their calling. Therefore before enacting legislation to determine arbitrarily the hours of work, we should give the men who are to be affected an oppor-