

ceiving from all quarters, and weighing these with the greatest care and discrimination, I feel that I am not boasting when I say that Canada is in a better condition than any other country as regards industrial and social conditions within its own boundaries. That being the case, I contend that it is strong evidence that we have made no mistake in treating labour with a generous hand, as we undoubtedly have done in Canada in comparison with other countries, and it warrants us in taking this forward step and establishing a standard eight-hour day in Canada. I shall, therefore, support the motion moved by the hon. member for West Peterborough (Mr. Burnham).

Mr. EDMOND PROULX (Prescott): Mr. Speaker, I am not in sympathy with my hon. friend (Mr. Stevens), because there is a danger of having too much governmental regulation. This question, I believe, can be left to employees and employers to settle. Labour unions are now very powerful; they can dictate their terms to their employers, and in certain industries if an eight-hour day is sufficiently long, I think they can manage to get their requests acceded to by their employers. In certain industries ten hours would not be harder than eight hours a day in others. Most of the industries which run night and day and which require three shifts, have adopted the eight-hour day; but where industries work only in the day time, eight hours would be a short day, and those industries could not produce the same quantities of goods in eight hours as they could in ten hours. Countries like Germany have maintained the ten-hour day, and Germany is producing more to-day than probably any of the allied countries. This question will also affect agricultural industry. Labour unions are satisfied that it should not be applied to agricultural industry or lumbering operations, but it cannot otherwise than affect agricultural industries. Farmers who live near a town or village will not be able to get their men to work ten hours a day when those men see others in the town or village working only eight hours, and we shall have diminished production. What we need is greater production, particularly in agriculture, and greater export if we are to stabilize the trade of this country. Decreasing the hours of labour will mean diminished production. Agriculture, like lumbering, is a seasonal occupation.

I think this is a question that can wait, and that can very well be dealt with by the employers and employees. It came before

them at the Industrial Conference last September. The labour unions represented there were strong for the eight-hour day, but I think the majority of the employers were against it. I am sorry that all the labour unions in this country were not represented at that conference. There are some labour unions in the province of Quebec which are doing good work and have a large membership that were not represented at that Conference, and these unions are not in favour of the eight-hour day for all industries, although they favour it for certain industries. We have a great war debt, which has to be paid, and how are we going to pay it if we decrease production in this country and lessen the means of earning?

Mr. BURNHAM: There is nothing in this resolution which would prevent a man from working twenty-four hours a day if he wanted to. The eight-hour day simply means payment on that basis. If anybody wished to make an agreement to work longer than that, it would be quite open for him to do so.

Mr. PROULX: But if you make the eight-hour day the standard, you would not be able to get men in many industries to work longer than that, or you would have to pay them perhaps fifty or one hundred per cent more than the regular rate for overtime. I am not in favour of this resolution, and I hope the Government will not be in a hurry to present to this House any measure for standardizing the hours of labour in this country or adopting the eight-hour day.

Mr. H. A. MACKIE (East Edmonton): I desire to speak to this resolution more particularly on account of what took place in the dying hours of last session, when there was a great disturbance throughout the Dominion, and more particularly in the Western provinces. Having been solicitor for the United Mine Workers of Alberta for ten years, I was deluged at that time with letters and telegrams in connection with the trouble. I brought the matter before the ministers and asked what steps would be taken to meet the situation. The agitation at that time was for collective bargaining, but it also involved the question of wages and hours. I was advised by those in authority that collective bargaining was a provincial matter as it related to the question of wages and hours, and this Government would take no steps to meet the demands of the people who were agitating at that time. On