

FIRST REPORT OF THE ROYAL LABOR COMMISSION.

To His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir Frederick Arthur Stanley, Baron Stanley of Preston, in the County of Lancaster, in the Peerage of Great Britain, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Governor General of Canada, and Vice-Admiral of the same :

Your Commissioners, appointed "for the purpose of enquiring into and reporting on the subject of labor, its relation to capital, the hours of labor, and the earnings of laboring men and women, and the means of promoting their material, social, intellectual and moral prosperity, and of improving and developing the productive industries of the Dominion, so as to advance and improve the trade and commerce of Canada; also of enquiring into and reporting on the practical operation of courts of arbitration and conciliation in the settlement of disputes between employers and employés, and on the best mode of settling such disputes; also of enquiring into and reporting on the expediency of placing such matters as are to form the subject of such inquiry under the administration of one of the Ministers of the Crown," beg leave to submit their report.

WORK OF COMMISSION.

The Commission visited and took testimony in the following places: In Ontario—Toronto, Windsor, Chatham, St. Thomas, London, Petrolia, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Kingston, Cornwall and Ottawa. In Quebec—Montreal, Quebec, Lévis, Sherbrooke, Capelton, St. Hyacinthe and Hull. In New Brunswick—St. John, Moncton, Chatham, Newcastle, Fredericton, Marysville, St. Stephen and St. George. In Nova Scotia—Halifax, Dartmouth, Londonderry, Spring Hill, Amherst, Stellarton, New Glasgow, Sidney Mines, Glace Bay and Bridgeport. About eighteen hundred witnesses were examined, including a considerable number from towns not visited by the Commission, and from agricultural districts. The testimony taken is hereto appended.

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION.

By the British North America Act the Provincial Legislatures are given exclusive power to make laws affecting property and civil rights. Your Commissioners cannot venture to determine where, in legislation affecting labor and capital, the authority of the Dominion Parliament ends and that of the Provincial Legislatures begins. They are conscious that it is neither their duty nor their privilege to make specific recommendations to authorities by whom they were not appointed and to whom they are not answerable. But they have felt that if they should be over-nice in doubtful cases they would pass over some matters of great importance. They have, therefore, felt themselves at liberty to direct attention to all the chief evils which were exposed by the testimony, and to ask for their removal, without presuming to determine what authority is responsible for those evils or possesses the power to correct them.

FEAR OF EMPLOYERS.

It is to be regretted that a number of witnesses refused to permit the publication of their names, fearing dismissal or other mark of disapprobation on the part of their employers. If that fear was well founded it is greatly to the discredit of those exercising such petty tyranny. In most cases, however, employers were quite willing that their hands should testify, and not a few actively interested themselves in the investigation.