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SAFEGUARDS TO EMPLOYERS.

The Ontario Government has apparently succeeded in railroading through the Legislature, the Act authorising the establishment of a State-administered workmen's compensation system. The leaders of the party were deeply committed in favor of this legislation, and it is suggested that the party's present circumstances inclined it to take a course which will lead it to have a considerable amount of popularity with an unthinking and easily-impressed electorate. The Ontario Government cannot be congratulated upon the celerity with which it has pushed through a measure that many believe with good reason to be both unjust and dangerous. Legislation in haste is often repented at leisure; it is possible that this will be the experience of Ontario in regard to workmen's compensation.

Meantime those who have steadily opposed the new legislation have no reason to be ashamed. They can confidently await the verdict of time whether their action has been justified. The suggestion is often made in the discussion of matters of this kind that those who are opposed to the wide-open kind of legislation which has been under discussion by the Ontario legislature are animated purely by selfish motives and that they are indifferent to the legitimate claims of workmen who are injured in the course of following their occupation. Nothing could be further from the truth. The principle of workmen's compensation is now admitted almost universally; employers equally with employees are keenly interested in the setting up of machinery which shall equitably and efficiently provide compensation for the injured. The *Pulp and Paper Magazine* recently said on this point:—"The manufacturers are anxious to have an act more just than any now in force, better than that in force in either England, Germany or the State of Washington, all of

which are held as leading examples. Again it is to the interests of the manufacturer and employer to have such means of settling disputes that arise from injury to workmen in their employ. Such an act would relieve them of many undesirable complications that sometimes arise under present conditions. It would provide a means for settling compensation according to a fixed rule and would thereby prove a saving. At present employers very often take on unnecessary and unexpected burdens in order to do what they think best by the injured workmen, which in many cases amounts to a great deal more than would be obtained under law. The manufacturers are anxious for a compensation act, and have done all in their power to assist the Commission in drawing up a draft bill."

But there is a considerable degree of difference between the attitude which willingly supports any equitable measure for the provision of compensation to injured workmen and that which would quietly accept such a measure as that which has been now pushed through. The employer needs safeguarding as well as the employee, and the new legislation so far from safeguarding him, inflicts an unjust burden. Legislation which directly penalises the enterprising and careful employer, and which makes the solvent employer who continues in business pay the continuing compensation for accidents to his insolvent competitor who has gone out of business, does not seem *prima facie* to be distinguished by its fairness. In any satisfactory workmen's compensation act, there must be safeguards for the employer as well as for the employee. The latter the Ontario Act provides to a certain extent (though even in this respect, the Act is not wholly fair, since it leaves the door wide open for the practise of malingering), the interests of the employers are entirely neglected. Time will show the results.