

mitted by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Ver-ville) is not designed to carry out that object. As a matter of fact this Bill as it is worded—as any gentleman of the legal profession will see if he reads it—would prohibit the government or the contractors for the government from going into the markets of the world to purchase any material whatsoever which was produced under a system which required the workmen who produced it to work more than eight hours a day. The government might make a contract to purchase uniforms in one department or to purchase groceries in another department, and if any of the work on any of the component parts of any articles the government so purchased were not confined to an eight hour day, then the whole contract would be void, and no matter how much value was given to the government under it, the contractor would not be able to recover one dollar, and the result would be disastrous. In other words, the Bill before the House would void and vitiate every contract the government might make for the purchase of materials, provided that any of the articles so purchased had been turned out of a shop or factory in which work of more than eight hours a day had been exacted. Now, that is altogether impossible and not at all in the interest of those who are asking for this legislation. The American Act has been drawn with much more care. That Act on more than one occasion has gone to a select committee of the House of Representatives, and an immense mass of testimony has been taken by that committee on the prospective operation of the Act. There have been at least, as I have found, two commissions on the subject. The report of the last commission, appointed during the year 1904, I hold in my hand. It is entitled:

Eight Hours on Government Work—Hearing before the Commission on Labour of the House of Representatives on the Bill H.R. 4064, intitled, a Bill Limiting the Hours of Daily Service of Labourers and Mechanics Employed upon Work done for the United States, or for any Territory, or for the District of Columbia or for Other Purposes.

The Bill is a very much more modified form of legislation of this nature than the Bill before this House. I will not burden the House by reading it, as it is somewhat lengthy. After dealing with the main features of the legislation intended to be enacted, it provides that the Act shall not extend to the following matters:

Nothing in this Act shall apply to contracts for transportation by land or water, or for the transmission of intelligence, or for such materials or articles as may usually be bought in open market, whether made to conform to particular specifications or not, or for the purchase of supplies by the government, whe-

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ther manufactured to conform to particular specifications or not. The proper officer on behalf of the United States, and territory, or the district of Columbia may waive the provisions and stipulations in this Act during time of war or a time when war is imminent, or in any other case when in the opinion of the inspector or any other officer in charge any great emergency exists. No penalties shall be imposed for any violation of such provision in such contract due to any emergency caused by fire, famine, or flood, by danger to life or to property, or by other extraordinary event or condition.

The American Bill also gives the contractor the right of appeal first, to the head of the department under which the work is being done; and, secondly, to the executive government or to one of the courts of the country. So that in the American Act there are not only various exceptions, which seem to me, at first sight, to be reasonable, but also provision for an appeal in case any person considers himself aggrieved under the operation of the Act. The matter in my opinion is entirely for the government to deal with. Perhaps the hon. gentleman who has introduced the Bill may indulge the hope that it will have a better fate than the resolution which was introduced into this House a few days ago by the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie). Be that as it may, the government should, in my opinion, grapple with this question. We all in this House sympathize with labouring men. At the same time, this is a matter that has to be proceeded with cautiously and prudently, or it will revolutionize the condition of the country. It is a matter on which, in my opinion, this House is not well enough informed at the present time to deal with. The American Congress on more than one occasion found it convenient to refer the question to a select committee to obtain evidence and make recommendations thereon. On the other side of the line they are still in that stage; and it seems to me that if this matter were dealt with in a similar way, so that the various interests affected might get their views before parliament or a committee of parliament, a Bill might be drafted which would in a reasonable way meet the demands, so far as they are just, along this line. If the government chooses to refer the Bill to a committee, before whom all parties and all interests affected will be heard and considered, I for one will back them up. It is not going too far, at this stage in our history, to advance the matter to that extent. If that were done, the matter, in some concrete form and intelligible manner, could be brought before the House and dealt with. It is not in such shape, in my opinion, at present. The Bill is altogether an impossible one; but the practice might be carried into certain of the public works of the country, with proper safeguards, after having the