

to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled;

That is a statement in which this House concurred, and in which I believe all the nations represented at the Peace Conference also concurred. It goes on:

An improvement of those conditions is urgently required; as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work.

Surely we were serious a year ago when we, as a nation, proudly, I think, entered into this great League of Nations, became a party to it, took our place at the forefront of it. Indeed, Sir, our Prime Minister, if I remember rightly, presented to that Conference these very articles arrived at by the Labour Commission or committee. A little further on, it says:

Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries.

And a little further on, it says also:

Holding as they do,—

That is, this particular portion of the Peace Conference, the Labour group.

—that labour should not be regarded merely as an article of commerce, they think that there are methods and principles for regulating labour conditions which all industrial communities should endeavour to apply, so far as their special circumstances will permit.

Then follow a series of nine specific articles citing what in their opinion should be the process of working out these improved conditions, and this series contains one article, No. 4, reading as follows:

The adoption of an eight-hours day of a forty-eight-hours week as the standard to be aimed at where it has not already been attained.

Upon this very important statement, presented to this House by the Prime Minister of Canada (Sir Robert Borden), the leader of the Government that I am now supporting, and arrived at at a conference which studied these problems from a world-wide as well as a national standpoint and at great length and in great detail, I propose to this House in support of the motion moved by the hon. member for Peterborough West (Mr. Burnham) that Canada should, by action of its Parliament, take the first national step, as I believe it would be, to bring into actual existence by law the intimation or suggestion made in this proposal at the Peace Conference.

I take another reason, and it is this, that it is common, ordinary justice. I believe

[Mr. Stevens.]

that industrial peace, or the settlement of industrial disputes, will be arrived at more speedily and will be made more permanent by the introduction of the elements of justice into the consideration of these disputes than in any other way. Compromise is good; but a frank recognition by a nation of the elements of justice, so far as it is possible to ascertain them, will, I say, bring about permanent industrial and social peace within our boundaries more quickly, directly and effectively than in any other way, and I hold that the demand for an eight-hour day is a just and fair demand on the part of labour. I do not wish this House to infer that I stand behind the extreme demands of labour as they are made in some of their presentations; but there are some of their demands which have the elements of justice pre-eminently present, and I think we should hasten to accede to these.

Another point is this, that already a very large proportion of the great industries of Canada recognize and practise the eight-hour day as a standard day. Therefore, it would be infinitely better, in the interest of a stable industrial condition in Canada, that there should be a national standardized eight-hour day, so that in different parts of the country, manufacturing interests, for instance, would know that in estimating the cost of their products they would have to take into account a standard eight-hour day. Why, for instance, should a factory in British Columbia recognize an eight-hour day, having been forced to that perhaps by the organized strength of labour, and a factory in Quebec, or in the Maritime provinces, or in Ontario manufacturing the same article, recognize a nine or a ten-hour day? The immediate consequence of such a condition is that one manufacturer is undoubtedly handicapped to a greater or lesser degree. In any case it does not provide for those who are considering investment in industrial concerns any idea of the stability of the hours of labour and of what is commonly called the conditions of the labour market. Therefore, I say it would be fairer to all if we had a standardized day of labour for the whole of Canada rather than to have in one province an eight-hour day and in another a ten-hour day, and in another a nine-hour day, and so on.

In conclusion, let me say this, that the industrial condition of Canada is not by any means in a hopeless state. I look over the world to-day and I read with the utmost attention and interest the reports we are re-