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THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY AGAIN.

In our last number appeared an editorial on this vexed question. Several correspondents, after reading that editorial, accused us of "trimming," and of sundry other heinous crimes. We wish, therefore, to present more fully our point of view.

Our editorial of October 1st was based upon the representations made by the mine managers of Cobalt to Commissioner Price. After commenting upon the arguments put forward by the operators, we made the following statements: "In principle the eight-hour day is sound. It has been applied successfully in several countries. It has also been applied unsuccessfully. Special conditions limit its applicability. If it is demonstrated that the special conditions outlined by the mine managers are sufficient cause for the retention of the longer day, the eight-hour day will be a mistake." To this opinion we still adhere.

At the outset, it must be clearly understood that, in the long run, the interests of owners and of employees are identical. Therefore, calm discussion, not violent controversy, is needed. The question then resolves itself into one of expediency. Is it, or is it not, expedient to introduce in any form the eight-hour day into the mines of Ontario? Our own opinion is that it is not expedient. And our reasons we shall give as plainly and as succinctly as lies in our power.

The mining industry of Ontario, although unquestionably in a prosperous condition, has not reached that stage of development where a change in working hours is either necessary or desirable. Prospects and small mines demand longer hours than do highly organized enterprises. The mere lack of working space and the duplication of effort make mining on a small scale expensive. This has been the case all over Ontario. It is particularly true of Cobalt.

Again, outside of Cobalt and Sudbury, how many mines have attained a dividend paying basis? One has little difficulty in counting them. But in a large number of localities there are prospects being opened and mines being worked that hold forth ample hope of profits. In almost every case the money available for this work is very limited in amount. Success largely depends upon speedy work. Any disturbing element now introduced would work havoc.

One fact that has generally been overlooked is that a considerable proportion of the miners do not want an eight-hour day. And this brings us to what seems to be the real gist of the matter.

As was pointed out in our former editorial, the miner is well paid, well fed, and well housed. His employment is less dangerous and brings higher remuneration.