

selves and their families, and if they were not permitted to do this they would suffer in consequence. The hon. member for Kootenay said that they had tried the eight hour day system in British Columbia and that while people predicted trouble from it the system was working all right now. Well, I was in British Columbia immediately after that law came into force and in every mining district I visited I was told that mining operations were literally paralyzed by it. For two years after its passage the mining operations of that country were a failure and many engaged in the industry had to go out of business. That is bound to be the case until an adjustment takes place between what is paid a man working eight hours this year and what was paid the same man working ten hours the year before. I say you cannot establish to the mind of any intelligent man that a working man will do as much in eight hours as he will do in a ten hour day. Of course I recognize that a man may work 10 hours in one kind of labour and not be overworked while in other branches a man may work only eight hours and be overworked, if you are going to try to even it up by a levelling system of eight hours a day you are certainly bound to do an injustice to some classes of labour. There are employers of labour in this country who themselves are obliged to work more than eight hours a day and more than 10 hours a day, and if he expects his employees to do as he is doing he is inflicting no injustice upon them. Now, we are apt to be too much afraid to deal with a question of this kind as we think it ought to be dealt with for fear it will work mischief against us when we come before our electors. I like to see a man with enough moral courage to do what he conscientiously believes to be right regardless of consequences. I believe that the men who are supporting this Bill are supporting it from conscientious convictions, but I believe also that if many hon. gentlemen expressed their opinion of this measure as freely as they do on other measures there would be very strong argument advanced against this Bill.

Hon. MACKENZIE KING (Minister of Labour). I am sure that the workingman of this country owe a debt of gratitude to the hon. member (Mr. Verville) for having brought to the attention of this House a Bill which has occasioned such an interesting discussion on this important subject. The Bill is entitled 'An Act respecting hours of labour on public works,' but the discussion has been almost entirely on the broad question of the hours of labour generally. And so far as that broad question is concerned I have no doubt we all feel that anything that can be done towards shortening the hours of toil for the great masses who

labour, will be of advantage not only to the working classes themselves but to the whole community. I cannot agree with the hon. member for Frontenac in his contention that men cannot produce such effective work by working shorter hours as they can by working excessive hours. The hon. gentleman carried his argument to an extreme when he said that if the reduction of the hours of labour were carried down to the last point it would mean that there would be no work done at all. Well, you can take the reverse of that argument and you can as well contend that if you extend the hours of labour beyond the endurance point, the workingman could not accomplish anything at all because of bodily fatigue. In these days when industrial processes are carried on by great natural powers, by electricity, by water, by steam, the intensity of labour has become tremendously heightened. And, in considering the question of shortening the hours of labour we must bear in mind not only the duration of labour but the intensity of labour as well. One hour's work on a machine that is going at high speed may take more out of a man than six hours at an occupation where his energies are not taxed to the same strenuous extent. I think I may safely say that the whole history of labour legislation in respect to shortening the hours of labour bears out the view that on the whole the shortening of the hours has been of immense benefit not only to the working people but to the industries themselves.

This question of shortening the hours of labour is primarily for the consideration of the provincial legislatures which have within their jurisdiction the enactment of laws respecting the hours of labour, the factory laws, the laws respecting mines, and cognate subjects; but, the discussion of the subject in this parliament is bound to be reflected in future legislation by the provinces and the general expression of opinion in this chamber that the shortening of the hours of labour is a good thing in itself will, we may hope, bear fruit. It has been pointed out that this Bill purports to do one thing, when in fact it does another. That is entitled 'An Act respecting the hours of labour on public works,' but that it goes further and deals with every conceivable kind of contract in which the government of Canada can be concerned. It is well that the House should understand that clearly before it pronounces on the measure. I believe myself that while the measure is intended by the hon. member (Mr. Verville) to relate only to public works, as a matter of fact it goes very much further than he intended. So far as this question has a bearing upon ameliorating the ordinary everyday life of the working people I submit that we should