

who are idle for a space of time is not the same as it would be if they were working steadily. The shortening of the hours of labour would to some extent solve the difficult problem of the unemployed. I am ready to thank the government for having appointed a Minister of Labour who can devote all his time and energy to the study of labour questions, and the fact that the labour people of this country have asked for the creation of such a portfolio for years and years past shows the necessity for it. When the Minister of Labour takes part in the debate to-day I hope he will be able to assure us that the eight hour day movement will be recognized by the government. Now, a couple of years since the hon. member for Hants brought before the House a resolution asking this government to aid in the prevention of the white plague. Is it not well known to the medical men of this country that it is in the large industrial establishments that the white plague starts, and very often finishes? Would not one of the best means of preventing the white plague be to give the workmen of Canada a chance to breathe the pure air of Heaven? How often is it that you see labour men go to the country for a few weeks or even a few days in the summer, by the lake shore, or the sea shore or in the forest; it is very seldom indeed they can afford to get a day's vacation. If we shorten the hours of labour we will enable the working people to enjoy some of the privileges which Providence has placed at the disposal of human beings, and I am sure hon. gentlemen will agree with me that this is all the more important in regard to factories where female and child labour is employed. Further, I think that if any gentleman in this House study the conditions of labour in America and Europe as well as in Canada, they will come to the conclusion that ninety per cent of the people are not clothed as they ought to be. I shall practice what I preach and be brief in my remarks, and in conclusion, I hope that the Minister of Labour will have something to say in favour of this measure, and that it will not be pushed along on the road to the cemetery as a good many similar measures have been. I beg to move the second reading of this Bill.

Mr. A. C. MACDONELL (South Toronto). I agree with the hon. gentleman (Mr. Verville) that this is an extremely important measure, but at the same time I have to remark that the hon. gentleman himself has not been wonderfully active in promoting the best interests of the Bill. I made a short examination of the previous fates of this Bill and I find that it was first introduced by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Verville) on the 11th of December, 1906, when he said:

The object of the Bill is to establish an eight hour day upon all public works throughout the country. It is not my intention to discuss the merits of the Bill at the present time as they will be discussed on the second reading. The Bill as it stands has no effect on wages to be paid on public works.

Then the Bill was read the first time, and the last time for that session. The Bill was again introduced by the hon. gentleman on the 14th of February, 1908, when it was read a first time, and that was the end of it. Then we come to last session when the hon. gentleman (Mr. Verville)—the Bill having been introduced previously—on the 27th of April, 1909, very shortly before the close of the session, moved:

That order 35 of the Public Bills and Orders for the second reading of Bill (No. 22) respecting hours of labour on public works be now called for the purpose of it being discharged on the Order Paper.

Mr. AMES. Why does the hon. gentleman wish the order discharged?

Mr. VERVILLE. Because its discharge will enable me to bring the matter before the House this session in another form. The question as to the hours of labour on public works is, I consider, of considerable importance at the present time.

The Bill then made its exit for the third time and was not again introduced as a Bill or in any other form that session. Now, Mr. Speaker, this question is before the people of this country as it is before the people of the neighbouring republic, and as a humble member of this House I think parliament should dispose of it in some businesslike manner. The American Congress has been dealing with this question for a great many years, and Bills have been introduced and discussed. I have in my hand a copy of what I think was the last Bill introduced during the session of 1904, and I see by a recent utterance of the president of the United States that he has declared his intention of in some way having the matter dealt with at the approaching session of Congress. One reason why I say this present Bill should be dealt with by parliament is that if you look at its contents you will find that its name is a misnomer. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Verville) has persistently called it 'an Act respecting the hours of labour on public works,' but as the Bill is submitted to the House it contains provisions of the most drastic nature. It is not a Bill regulating the hours of labour upon public works of the country, and if it were I think there are many hon. gentlemen in this House who would be willing to go some distance to regulate the hours of labour which the government would permit on its works or which it would allow its contractors to exact. I believe that such a proposition would be favourably considered by a great many members in this House, but the Bill sub-