

have, therefore, all the elements that will enable us to pass a statute reciting that after a certain date the working day shall be understood to be eight hours. That being the case, since the resolution calls for the exercise of our jurisdiction only—and that jurisdiction we have—steps should be taken to enact this legislation. It is advisable from all points of view that the working day should be stabilized and that there should not be what we might call the pulling and hauling that is going on now in different countries and in different parts of the same countries regarding the length of the working day. We may hope that when the western powers have established a reasonable working day, all the eastern powers will have regard to international interests by doing the same thing.

The greatest argument in favour of the adoption of the eight-hour day is the finding of the Peace Conference, if such we may call it, at Paris. At the Conference held in Switzerland and at the Conference lately held in Washington, which the President of the Council (Hon. Mr. Rowell) attended, it was agreed that eight hours was the proper working day. I do not understand, nor have I been able to gather, that we have made it a law in Canada that eight hours shall be considered, except by special provision or express private contract, to be the working day. There was a time, of course, when employers of various kinds took advantage of competition to require their employees to work unconscionable hours. That day has gone by. No employer wants such a thing now; no employer attempts to exact such a length of toil. Labour has become classified, as it were, and is not going about seeking what it may do to be saved and what might be for its benefit without having anybody to legislate for it or look after it. Having ceased, as I say, to be in that position, it now presents a united front, and its attitude is a reasonable one. It asks the employer to agree to a universal eight-hour day, and it asks the lawmakers of this country to crystallize that understanding into a statute. I fancy that it will be done, and we shall then have obtained the support, for the peace and good government of this country, of the great body of organized labour—a most reasonable body; a body which is seeking for the settlement of its affairs on a reasonable and logical basis. When these have been settled we may look for some degree of industrial peace and progress.

In connection with this whole industrial question, no charge of profiteering has been made against labour. Labour, except in a few individual instances, has made no attempt to indulge in profiteering; but the many cases of companies and individual employers who have been profiteers has excited the dismay of labour and the anger of all the consumers that I know. Therefore, when you come to examine the stand taken by labour in this particular and the aspirations of labour, surely you will realize that labour is entitled to every consideration. As I say, all these conferences have agreed that the demand is reasonable and that compliance with it would make for the prosperity, health and good government of the whole world. Surely, therefore, it is time for us in Canada, if we have not already done so, to say: Let eight hours be the understood legal national working day.

Mr. H. H. STEVENS (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to state very briefly the reasons why I consented to second the motion submitted by my hon. friend (Mr. Burnham). I hold in my hand a copy of Hansard of the second session of last year, which contains the statement of the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) and his report to the House of his activities as our chief representative at the Peace Conference. In that statement I find an account of the tentative agreement entered into with regard to improving the conditions for labour, and also a very clear statement that world-wide peace was largely dependent upon industrial and social peace within the bounds of each country, and that this industrial and social peace could best be brought about by instituting certain reforms which apparently were deemed by all to be necessary.

I shall not weary the House by making any lengthy remarks on the subject; I shall simply read one or two brief paragraphs from the statement officially presented to the House last September. The Prime Minister said:

Side by side with the Covenant—

That is, the League of Nations.

—stand the provisions of the Labour Convention. It was my privilege to attend the earlier meetings of the Commission which framed the articles on that subject now embodied in Part XIII of the Treaty. At one of these meetings the preamble of the Labour Convention was framed. It is as follows.

That preamble contains the following paragraph:

And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation