

They urge that the eight hour law should apply to all mines, with no qualification or exemption, except only for cases of emergency where life or property is in imminent danger, and that it would be fatal to the usefulness of the law to exempt contract or piece work or to complicate the Act by special provisions or exemptions.

WHAT THE MINE MANAGERS SAY.

The mine managers generally oppose the eight hour law. Less than half a dozen are wholly in favor of it, a few are not strong one way or the other, while others would not object to it if it was made eight hours face to face and not bank to bank and provisions were inserted to meet special conditions and contingencies. Quite a number would have no objection to a nine hour day.

The arguments urged against the adoption of the eight hour legislation are very numerous, but those in which the greater number of its opponents concur are: That it would mean reduction of wages and consequent dissatisfaction of the men; that it would decrease the output and profits of the industry, make low grade propositions unworkable and discourage influx of capital; that the eight hour law has in fact had disastrous effects in British Columbia, Australia, and parts of the United States, and is driving capital and labor out of England and the United States; that the popular belief that underground employment on the present basis is injurious or objectionable is not correct, experience, the hospital records, and the fact that men prefer underground to surface work being appealed to in support of this contention; that legislation upon such a question is not wise, and that it would be inexpedient to disturb existing conditions, which it is claimed are generally satisfactory to the men who are willing to work.

It is also urged by a large number that, even if such a law were proper or desirable in very large mines or in more advanced stages of the industry, it is not justified in Ontario, where most of the mines are comparatively small and the industry largely in the development stage; and it is pointed out that while some of the mines pay very large dividends many others in different parts of the province have but a slight margin of profit and cannot bear increased expense.

By the Cobalt Mine Managers it is also urged that they have to compete in silver with Mexico, which has cheaper labor and less expense by reason of a warmer climate; that they have to pay supplementary revenue taxes and some of them royalties, and that freight and other charges are high; that a shorter day would necessitate greater speed and conduce to increase of accidents; that as the time of actual operation of the drills is only 6.45 hours a day, the rest of the 10 hour day being taken up in going to and from work, taking down and setting up drills, blasting, etc., a reduction of two hours in the working day would mean only 4.45 hours of actual drilling, and would therefore cause a reduction of 31 per cent. in the output and in the dividends.

Others object to the eight hour law on the ground that it is of socialistic tendency, and say that the agitation for it comes from undesirable foreign organizations, from agitators seeking their own personal advantage, and from those who are not willing to do an honest day's work under any conditions. Others, though not opposing the law in principle, point out that it would work harshly in their own particular cases. One requests that if any such law is passed it should be postponed for ten years so that he may have time to get out of the mining business.