

12.00 24 1/69

SPEECH BY MR TORRENS.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, 17TH JUNE.

On the order of the day for going into Committee of Supply,

Mr W. M. TORRENS rose to move "That the continued want of employment among those who live by waged labour in many of the great towns of the kingdom calls for the special consideration of this House, with a view to the means that may best be devised for the remedy of the same without delay," and, after referring to two petitions on the subject which he had received for presentation, he said, on that midsummer eve, when the weather was comparatively genial, when the town was full, and there were various alternatives of temporary occupation that helped men to forget the long interval of involuntary idleness, with all its attendant privation, through which they had passed, the House was free from that direct pressure of importunity and alarm which at an earlier period of the Session might have been said to interfere with their dispassionate judgment in the matter. But great classes of the community, both ratepayers and working men, had suffered bitterly last winter and the winter preceding, and all the inquiries he had been able to make confirmed him in the opinion that there were no new openings for trade in the winter that was approaching sufficient to give any guarantee against the recurrence of like misery. He also feared that the Poor-Law returns did not indicate that great improvement which would, if the logic of such statistics were admitted, discharge this House from the responsibility which many felt regarding the next six months. He was not going to discuss the administration of the Poor Law, and he asked the House to consider the question of the want of employment wholly apart from the question of poor-rates and pauperism. What the House had to provide for and deal

For the Poor Law