

# REPORT.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE to whom were referred the several Petitions on the subject of Sabbath labour in the Post Office Department, and on the Canals, with power to Report by Bill or otherwise—RESPECTFULLY REPORT :

That they have given earnest and protracted consideration to the important subject committed to their care, and have used every exertion to ascertain the extent of the evil complained of by the Petitioners, and the probable effects of the remedy suggested by them.

The total number of petitions referred to Your Committee was not less than 196—156 being from Upper Canada, and 40 from Lower Canada. Of these petitions, 23 were from various Religious Bodies or Societies (20 in Upper and 3 in Lower Canada); and 9 from Town or Township Municipalities in Upper Canada. The aggregate number of signatures (exclusive of the above) was 20,484,—17,484 being from Upper, and 3,000 from Lower Canada. A list of the petitions is appended hereto, marked No. 1. The number of these petitions, and the parties from whom they proceed, clearly show that a deep feeling prevails in the community, in all sections of the Country, on the subject of Sabbath observance.

It will be seen by the evidence, that the extent of Sunday labour in the Post Office Department is very great. One thousand and twenty-six Offices are open for the public transaction of business from one to two hours, and an additional space is required for distribution at all Offices where Sunday Mails are received. The number of persons thus compelled to labour on the Lord's Day is estimated by the Postmaster General at two thousand five hundred persons. To these must be added the stage-drivers and boatmen employed in carrying the Mails on Sunday, and the clerks and servants who are compelled to attend at the several offices for the letters of their employers. As regards the Canals, it has been found impossible to obtain an accurate statement of the number of persons who would be relieved from Sunday labour by their being closed on that day; but the number of lock-tenders, mariners, engineers and other persons habitually employed upon them, is unquestionably very large.

That it would be desirable to dispense with this vast amount of Sunday labour, no one denies; the only difference of opinion found by the Committee to exist is upon the point, whether it can be abolished without serious injury to the social and material interests of the community. Laying aside, therefore, for the moment, the consideration whether a habitual disregard of an admitted physical Law of Providence could be otherwise than hurtful to the interests of man—the Committee turned their attention to the inquiry, how far, and in what way, the mercantile and social interests of the Country could be supposed to suffer from the entire stoppage of the practice.

With this view, it was resolved to obtain the evidence of men in different positions of business life throughout Canada, on the subject; and accordingly a Circular (to be found in the Appendix to this Report, No. 2) was prepared and dispatched to persons in the several sections of the Country, who from their standing and occupations were in a position to communicate reliable information. In reply to these questions nearly a hundred communications were obtained, from which much important information has been gathered. The replies to the several questions have been carefully collated and will be found in the evidence attached to the Report. The Committee had also before them several witnesses from different