

servance of the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, as a day of rest. He said: Mr. Speaker, I shall not detain the House at any length upon this Bill, and I beg the ear of the House while I present matters which I think are of sufficient importance to be worthy of its careful consideration.

I do not stand here to advocate a religious measure. The Bill does not propose to say what a man's faith shall be, what his religious usages shall be, where he shall go to church, whether he shall go to church at all or not, or what his conduct in a religious sense in any manner whatever shall be. The Bill deals with the question of the Sunday rest from the civil standpoint alone. It presumes that Sunday rest to the labourer is a civil right, and that this Parliament has the right, and should exercise the right, to secure to labourers rest on Sunday—rest which, in many instances, they are unable to enjoy without the intervention of the law, and the enjoyment of which is not with them a matter of free choice, for they are often compelled to labour upon this rest day against their wishes and in violation of what ought to be under the law a privilege and a civil right. There need be no fears of religious legislation in connection with this Bill. I do not know that I can even say that the Bill is earnestly promoted or sustained by the religious sentiment of this country, so far as the laity of the various churches are concerned. It seems to be to a large extent a matter of indifference to professing Christian people in Canada whether or not a law is enacted for the purpose of securing to labourers their right to the Sunday rest. We do occasionally have resolutions passed by synods, conferences, assemblies and presbyteries bearing upon this matter; but we have no indication of any great degree of popular feeling on the subject. If some section of the country wants to impose a duty for the purpose of bleeding one class for the benefit of another, if some material interest is at stake, we shall have delegations visiting Ottawa to impress upon the Government the necessity of acceding to their wishes; but so far as I am aware, no delegation of professing Christian people has ever visited this capital to urge upon this Government or upon any other Government in power, the propriety of enacting a Sunday rest law. Therefore, I think I am warranted in saying that religious fears may be dismissed, and that, so far as any purpose may be supposed to exist on the part of Christian communities to force upon the people of Canada an obnoxious religious measure, such fears are not well founded.

I repeat that this Bill deals with the question of the Sunday rest from a civil standpoint only. While it affirms that the right to enjoy that rest should be deemed on the part of the labourer a civil right, and asks for a cessation from labour on the Lord's Day, the personal conduct of all individuals

is left perfectly free. They can go to church or refrain from going to church, or spend the day in any other way they choose, so far as any enactment of the law is concerned; the law merely providing that the labourer shall have the right of rest and the enjoyment of religious privileges on that day, if he chooses to exercise that right. The law will step in and prevent his being deprived of the exercise of that right, which should be one of the most precious of all rights in the eyes of a Christian man.

This Bill is no novelty in legislation in civilized and Christian countries. As long ago as A.D. 958, under King Edgar, a Bill was passed in the British Parliament with regard to Sunday observance; and since that time not less than thirty enactments relating to this matter have been placed on the Statute-books of Great Britain. Every American state, save three, has laws on the subject. Within the last decade, France, Holland, Belgium, Austro-Hungary, Denmark, Sweden and Norway have passed laws with reference to the observance of Sunday as a day of rest, and laws with regard to this matter are in contemplation, and I do not know but consummated before this time, in Russia and Spain. So, I repeat, that legislation in this line is not a novelty, and when I present this Bill to-day, I do it sanctioned by precedent and usage in England and other countries for ages past.

The Bill, of course, proposes to impose certain restraints. It proposes to impose restraints with regard to labour. It may be urged that this Parliament is exceeding its proper jurisdiction and its proper functions in saying that that which is a natural right, the right of labour, shall be restricted or in any wise curtailed. But it often becomes necessary to curtail what are properly natural rights, for the purpose of promoting the public good. For instance, it is held to be perfectly proper to pass enactments for the compulsory education of children. The parent is the natural guardian of the child, and naturally has the right to decide what the child shall do and what he shall not do; but the law steps in and overrides the parent's natural guardianship and the exercise of what appears to be a natural right, and says that the child shall go to school and be educated. That interference on the part of the state is made because it is desirable in the interests of the state that the child should receive education. The law may and does sanction the selling of liquor; but the same law provides that liquor shall not be sold on Sunday. It abridges the right of the man who has the privilege of carrying on a legal business, to carry on that business on the Lord's Day. The law makes provision with regard to sanitary needs and regulations. The agent of the law can go to your house or mine and command the abatement of any nuisance that may exist on the premises, although under the law the house is the castle of the subject. The law