

FACTORY ACT.

Sessions of Commission Held Yesterday Afternoon and Evening.

Mr. Stevens Thinks Most of the Evidence Heard is Useless, and Hearing It is Only a Waste of Time.

The Factory Act Commission held its first session in the government rooms, Church street, Thursday afternoon, and there were present the following commissioners: Mrs. Emma Fiske, Chas. McDonald and M. J. Kelly. Secretary James Stevens of St. Stephen was also present.

Several witnesses were heard during the session, the majority of whom were employees, so that naturally the evidence was favorable to existing conditions. Witnesses were not examined under oath.

W. G. SCOVILL

W. G. Scovill, who was the first to give evidence, said that he personally looked after the tailoring department of his business, and that his concern employed no boys or girls under 14 years of age. The room in which the employees work has ten windows and the floors are swept each day. The building was not supplied with fire escapes. Some of his employees take lunch at the building, there being no separate apartment for this. No accidents had ever occurred.

ABRAHAM ISAACS.

Abraham Isaacs, manufacturer of cigars, next gave evidence. The tobacco dust of his establishment, he said, had never much affected him. His establishment is divided into three apartments. The whole floor is 70x32 ft. In one room, which is 40x22, there are 40 workers. In another room, 10x20, there are two women, and in another room, 15x15 ft., there are three workers. In the lower portion of the building he has another room with about ten workers. His employees are all girls. None of them are under 14 years of age. His hours are from 8:30 a. m. to 5 p. m., with an hour for dinner. The building was well lighted and ventilated. He believed tobacco to be a great disinfectant and therefore healthy.

THE DOORS UPSTAIRS OPENED INWARDS.

He had a separate room for his employees to take lunch in.

CANON RICHARDSON.

Rev. Canon Richardson, who visited the cotton mills Wednesday, said that it was hard to determine the age of the boys, who he said were uneducated. All of them assured him that they were over 14 years of age. In both factories the fire facilities were good, but the sanitary system bad. In the York factory the odor about the closets was pretty strong.

In the majority of cases the employees appeared to take their lunch in the factory. There did not appear to be any separate room for this purpose. The hours are from 6:30 a. m. to 12, and from 1 p. m. to 6:30 p. m. This is the 60 hour per week system in vogue throughout the Dominion. The temperature in some of the rooms was excessive, but the men did not seem to mind it.

Mr. Richardson thought compulsory school education would have the effect of keeping children away from the factories until they were fourteen years old.

Mr. Richardson found a good deal of cotton dust in the factory. Some of the employees said that it affected their eyes somewhat, but that it did not seem to be injurious to their lungs. Generally the employees gave the opinion that they considered the mills pretty good places.

Mr. Kelly—They would not say otherwise, as it might mean the loss of their positions.

T. F. WHITE.

Thomas F. White, manager of the White Paper Co., described the conditions at his factory. There are a number of working rooms of dimensions varying from 100 x 40 feet to 25 x 30 feet. None of the employees are under 14 years of age. In the rooms in which the girls are employed there are fans. The floors are cleaned every week. There are no fire escapes. An automatic hose reel is stationed on the ground floor and on the other floors there are chemical extinguishers. There are four water closets, two adjoining the girls' clothes room and two on the ground floor. The girls take lunch in a separate room provided for that purpose. A few minor accidents have occurred in the factory.

A. HART.

A. Hart, tobacco manufacturer, told of the conditions at his factory, Union street. None of his employees are under 14 years of age. He has no fire extinguishers. The factory is provided with water closets. His hours are from 8 a. m. to 5:30 p. m.

Mrs. Fiske said when she visited the factory the dust bothered her.

Mr. Hart was in favor of compulsory education.

C. W. BROWN.

C. W. Brown of the D. F. Brown Paper Co. was the last person to give evidence. Some under 14 years of age were employed at his factory. There are no fire escapes. A fire extinguishing apparatus is being installed around the building. There are chemical extinguishers and water buckets. There is a water closet on each floor. The employees have a separate room in which to take their lunch, but they don't take advantage of it. When asked if he could not compel his employees to use the separate room, Mr. Brown said he did not think he could. Mr. Brown was not in favor of a factory act. He did not think it was necessary in St. John.

EVENING SESSION.

At the evening session all the commissioners were present, including Kilgour Shives of Campbellton, who was absent from the morning session.

PETER C. SHARKEY.

The first witness called was Peter C. Sharkey, a freight handler, who had been strongly urged by the Fabian League to do all in his power to have a factory act placed upon the statute books. He knew of children who had been compelled to work in the cotton factory, where sanitary arrangements were not satisfactory. There was no arrangement for carrying off the dust and the conditions were such as would be conducive to good health. Last winter it was particularly severe. The conditions as represented by him were denied by the Fabian League to ascertain the facts, but was refused admission and was unable to go through. He met employees of a large baking firm in St. John and from the looks of the children he judged that the conditions were not as they should be, and that they were not properly taken care of. He had seen children faint as they came into the open air after being at work in the bakery.

He thought the conditions in St. John tobacco factories were such as would make it impossible for a child to escape in case of fire and also that particles of tobacco floating about were injurious. There was a single closet to be used in one factory by about 20 women and about 50 men. The delegation from the League also found that in some factories where edibles were manufactured, diseased persons were employed, in one instance four at a time. The rolling and wood-working factories made no pretence at all to having sanitary arrangements. He also found that many run machines were employed, and that the children the machines they are working upon. As an instance he mentioned a boy running an engine in St. John which he did not know the use of.

Laundries were found to be excessively hot and much of the machinery was not protected that well might have been. In his judgment there were children under 14 years of age who worked in these factories. In reply to Mr. Palmer, he said he knew of a baker who had a stable in the same building in which the baking was done. He thought a factory act should be put upon the statute books, and that it and a compulsory school law should run hand in hand.

JAS. R. WOODBURN.

Jas. R. Woodburn, machinist, was next called. His was office work. At present his firm has 9 or 10 employees. He is building a new factory. Only one employee is under 18 years of age. There is a row of windows on each side, and also there is ventilation in the roof. In some businesses he thought it necessary to have a room for lunch, also separate closets for men and women. In his small shop he did not think a lunch room necessary. The province should have a factory act, but that it should be under proper public control, especially in St. John. He knew of no children employed under 14 years of age, nor did he have any personal knowledge about factories.

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Mr. Murray wished to add that at the present time there are no provisions respecting the safeguarding of children against moving machinery. All factories should be compelled to stand on an equal footing here. One has only to go into laundries, machine shops and some of the mills in St. John to be impressed with the need of protection against moving machinery.

Mr. Sharkey stated in addition to what he had already said that it had been found that many employees had been unwilling to give evidence for fear of prejudicing their positions. Thomas Fitzgerald, carpenter, though not summoned, gave some evidence. He worked in a mill for 10 years. There are cases, he thought, in which a factory act would be beneficial. Some places are very dusty, especially about the hand-operated machines of woodworking factories.

Mr. McCristall, printer, thought a factory act was necessary for New Brunswick. Throughout the whole employed world it was thought necessary, and there was no reason why New Brunswick should be behind. Where he works there are about nine employees, all over 14 years of age, one of whom worked in a woodworking factory. He had worked in a woodworking factory for 10 years. He believed they had a bad machine in the Sun office.

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At Friday morning's session of the Factory Act commission, the first witness to be examined was Rev. W. Nicholson. He thought a Factory Act was a necessity in New Brunswick. The employees form a large body of the population and should have in their power to do more effectively. The existing laws concerning themselves. Only yesterday he visited a factory in the city and found the most wretched conditions existing. The sanitary arrangements were poor and the thirty-five or more employees were somewhat cramped. He talked with a number of the employees and they expressed their views as to the existing conditions. The factory he had in mind was an axe factory.

W. F. HATHWAY, wholesale grocer, was the next witness.

W. F. Hathway, wholesale grocer, was the next witness. He was of the opinion that a factory act was necessary and gave some reasons for such legislation. In many of the factories the doors opened inward, the stairways were dark, dust was abundant, machinery was unguarded, and the ventilation was unsatisfactory. One great reason why there should be a Factory Act was that in many places there were children under 14 years of age employed.

After describing his visits to several factories, Mr. Hathway said, in answer to a question of Mrs. Fiske, that he thought it should be classed as a factory. He had never employed a child. He admitted that considerable dust was encountered by the workmen and he had often talked with the foreman about methods of providing against it.

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Here Commissioner McDonald jumped on Mr. Hathway. It was a very remarkable thing, he said, that a man posing as labor leader, and a reformer and pretending to be so terribly concerned about the welfare of his workmen should come before that commission and be forced to admit that a state of affairs similar to those he tried to expose in other factories existed in his own. In the course of a rather vicious attack, he compared Mr. Hathway to the well known biblical character who thanked God that he was not as other men were.

Mr. Hathway's only response was that he thought the commissioners were appointed to act as judges, not as advocates.

James Pender, of the Pender Nail Works, described the conditions at his factory. He employed no boys under fourteen years of age. Ventilation at the factory is afforded by sky lights. A fan is used to draw off the smoke from the forges. His employees number about 70, at whose disposal there are four water closets. With the exception of Saturday his employees cease work at six o'clock in the evening. On Saturday they cease at 5 o'clock. The factory system of work is that of a factory act. There was no undue coercion of labor here, in fact there was

not steady employment. One of the principal things which legislation is needed for is sanitation. He thought, however, the board of health could be empowered to look after this.

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much thought, although they might be very honest in their evidence, yet it was scarcely worth the while to take up the time of the commission in hearing evidence of this nature.

WILLIAM LONG. William Long, warehouse man, said that his hours of labor were from 7 a. m. to 12 p. m. He had no complaint to make, and knew of no children under 14 years of age working in the factory.

HARRY GOLDSWORTHY. Harry Goldsworthy, builders' laborer, previously a stone laborer, gave some interesting evidence. He did not think some of the Jewish clothing establishments should be allowed to exist in St. John. He knew of several sweat shops in the north end—three from the corner of Brooks street, and others in other places. In one the proprietor visited children were allowed to run about among the machinery. In another a man had seven rooms in which he and his employees lived and worked at making clothing. One girl in a certain establishment was making \$3 or \$4 a fortnight, and crossed the ferry night and morning. Had there been a law recently against the work in a factory, and had she had a better education and her condition would have been better.

A lady had been talking with many an employer of a cotton factory, and had stated that her fear of losing her job, upon which her mother as well as herself is largely dependent, she would like to appear before the commission and state the wretched conditions which prevail where she works.

H. C. RANKINE. Henry C. Rankine, of T. Rankine & Sons, biscuit manufacturers, gave the dimensions of the room in which about 25 or 40 persons were employed. He endeavored to avoid employing boys under 14 years of age. Floors are swept three or four times a day. Half of the employees take lunch in the building. There is no separate room for this, but they do not eat in the workroom. He doubted that they would use it if one were provided. There are no holidays in their establishments. They receive half-holidays on Saturdays for three months in summer and are paid full time. They are given all the legal holidays and receive pay as well.

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Another Russian Ship Sunk.

Three of Vladivostok Squadron Met Japanese Ships and Suffered in a Sharp Engagement.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Aug. 14.—The Japanese legation has a cablegram from Tokyo today saying that the Russian squadron fought three vessels of the Vladivostok squadron this morning off the coast of Tsushima Island. The Russian cruiser Rurik was sunk. The other two ships, which appeared to have suffered heavily, fled northward. Japanese damages are slight.

CHE FOO, Aug. 13, noon.—A message has just been received here saying that the Russian cruiser Novik escaped from Tsing Chou at the expiration of the time limit of 24 hours set on her remaining there. No fighting at sea has yet been reported.

BEIJING, Aug. 13.—The Russian protected cruiser Novik left Tsing Chou (at the entrance of Kiao Chou Bay, the German concession on the Shan Tung peninsula, where she arrived Thursday night) within the 24 hour limit, according to an official dispatch to the navy department from the governor of Kiao Chou. Several other Russian vessels are still in the harbor in a disabled condition. The German admiral is not willing that the names of the ships and the details of the damages should be published on official authority, because such intelligence might be considered inconsistent with neutrality in the Russo-Japanese war.

Chas. Vall, laundryman, stated the size of his workrooms, and that 30 persons are employed in the work. None is employed under 14 years of age. There had been a couple of accidents in his laundry, both on the mangle, but these were due to carelessness. He said that the mangle was a factory act, provided such would not cost him too much.

Mr. Sharkey, who had given evidence previously, asked the chairman of the commission intended to inquire into the hours of labor, and was told that it was not their intention to take up this matter. He inquired if the commission intended to inquire into the hours of labor,