

bour. He said: I may offer a few reasons why the government propose to create this particular department. In a general way, I concur with the remarks made by my hon. friends on both sides, as to the undesirability of increasing the number of ministers, and I have also my own particular views as to what might be done and which I explained on a former occasion. But with respect to this particular measure, I would call the attention of the House to the fact that within the last very moderate number of years the whole industrial situation, and more especially on this continent, has undergone many and very important changes. Within a comparatively short number of years, three things have occurred in the neighbouring republic, and to a lesser extent in Canada, none of which, I may say, I regard with great favour. There has been too great a congestion, I think, in the various towns and cities in the United States and in certain parts of Canada. Agriculture has been rather at a discount, and a great number of our people have betaken themselves rather to the task of distribution than to the task of production. Now, I believe that, particularly in a country like Canada, the agricultural element is the backbone of its prosperity, and that anything which tends in any way to divert men from the soil and bring them into the cities, particularly where they are not going to engage in productive occupations, but rather act as middlemen, is not best for Canada. That is one thing; another is the fact that there has been a terrible accumulation of huge fortunes in individual hands. That I hold to be a threat of the very worst kind to civilization, and I have regarded with increasing apprehension the tremendous accumulations that have taken place, notably in the United States, in a much smaller degree with ourselves, and which I think are more likely to endanger the prosperity of both the United States and of other countries where the same state of things prevail, than almost any other cause I know. From that has arisen the state of things which, I think every hon. gentleman here who has studied the matter will agree with me in saying, requires the earnest and serious consideration of the legislatures of every country where it

arises; I mean the very marked division which now exists between labour and capital. It is hardly too much to say that these two forces, both of which are eminently necessary to the prosperity of a country, and which ought to work together in harmony, are, one might say, almost arrayed in hostile camps against each other. We have seen in other countries, and to some extent in our own, what tremendous mischiefs arise from a collision between organized labour and its employers. The cost of a great strike, such, for example, as that which occurred a few years ago in connection with the coal fields in the United States, almost equals the cost of a great war. For the purpose mainly of doing what can be done by the government to reconcile what I may say are these hostile factions, at any rate to provide means whereby a better understanding may be arrived at between these parties, the government have thought it expedient to create a department which should be very specially charged with the duty of looking after the interests of labour, and incidentally of everything connected with labour, and in particular would be charged with the duty for which an Act has been specially provided, of establishing and maintaining courts of arbitration, voluntary or otherwise, whereby and through which these disputes may be averted. I need not say that the cost of a Department of Labour, organized as it is proposed to be, is a most insignificant thing compared with the cost of any considerable strike. The smallest strike almost would involve a greater loss to the community than probably the Department of Labour would in several years. I may also observe that in other countries similar departments and Ministers of Labour have been created, and I think that on the whole the result has been very satisfactory, and that the experience of what is known as the Lemieux Act has, on the whole, been very satisfactory in Canada. For all these reasons, the government has deemed it wise to ask parliament to permit them to create a new department which shall be specially charged with the adjustment of the differences that I have alluded to, that have arisen and are arising all over this continent, though more especially in the republic to the south of us, between organ-