

women's wages, it should not be applied at least to some classes of men's wages, with the provision that a proper type of law should first be passed, and then that the proper type of administration of this law should be applied.

Now, in regard to the proper type of law: there have been on this continent two types of laws, one known as the "Flat Rate Law", and the other as the "Commission" law. The Flat Rate Law is in vogue in several of the United States, such as Utah, and states not greatly industrialized, and the first essay of minimum wage registration in Canada was by the province of Alberta, and was a law of this kind. The province of Alberta has, however, since then, changed its law, and has a Commission law. The Flat Rate law merely consists of writing into the Factory Act of the province a provision declaring that no wage shall be less than such and such a sum. The Flat Rate law is not an effective law, for two reasons, amongst others. In the first place, it does not engage the co-operation of the parties which are affected, which I think is vital; the employers and employees are not consulted, their interest is not secured, and it lacks flexibility in administration. The factory inspector carries the law in his hand. He has no authority to do more than say to the employers, "This is the law and you must obey it". He would not consider special circumstances, whereas a commission, which has been given by law general authority to do certain things, can administer that law in such a way as to suit particular cases, making a distinction between one trade and another, between one section of the province and another, and as the cost of living varies between the several sections, so can the commission differentiate when dealing with particular instances. Let me give you a trifling illustration which will show that. In minimum wage regulations, a very valuable one is that which deals with the proportion of experienced workers, for any minimum wage order will set only the cost of living wage for those who have learned the trade. Learners are partially producers, and partially pupils. In some trades, the amount of production they give at first is so very small that if the employer were required to pay any considerable wage, he would not take them on, and we would have no learners in that trade. It has happened in the past where that mistake has been made. It is a good principle that no employer shall be allowed to discharge his employees unless they have learned their trade. Regulations were put into a minimum wage order that not more than fifty per cent—that is the percentage we take in Ontario—of the employees, shall be learners and get less than an adult experienced minimum wage. There will be cases where a business is starting, or where an entirely new industry is starting, or where perhaps there has been a fire in the plant, or it has been closed down for a considerable time, where it is practically impossible to comply with that order for the time being, and where it is of the utmost importance that the employer should have at once a working force that is more than to a very slight extent experienced. In such a case, he has a right to a permit for six months or a year, to give him a chance to train some of his workers. A commission can do that kind of thing, while a factory inspector cannot. That is why I say the advantage of the commission form in point of flexibility is important. In minimum wage laws, then, there are these two things to be kept in mind: there is legislation, and there is administration, and I should suppose the important question before this committee is the matter of uniformity between the several provinces. I do not know whether it is to be decided that this is a matter for Dominion legislation or provincial legislation. It is, at least possible that it will be taken as a matter of provincial legislation, and I suppose it is also possible that some Dominion law might operate in a similar function to that in which the Service Law operates, that in which the Old Age Pension Law is supposed to operate, namely, that the Dominion will sit in with the provinces on some basis or other, and result in a harmonization throughout the several provinces. The point I wish to make is that it is of great importance that there should be harmony in administration