

spending money in the interests of the people, in that respect.

Time and again people have asked me: What is the Government doing? The people did not know, and hon. members did not know; and, replying to the hon. minister, I may say that the ministry did not take the trouble to inform the House. The books and pamphlets which are issued from time to time in this respect convey a certain amount of information of a geological or mineralogical character, but without discussing economic questions in any satisfactory way. I wish to give to the National Council of Industrial Research the highest possible praise, their intentions are of the best, and they earn far more than the miserable pittance we give them.

I would therefore ask the minister to let this resolution go through in order that the people at large may be impressed with the idea that our minds are not closed to suggestions of progress.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I have no objection to the motion going through, but I would suggest to the hon. member that the first portion of the resolution might be amended. Having secured discussion of the motion I thought it was the intention of the hon. member to withdraw it, as I see no purpose to be served by not taking that course. It does appear to me that it would not be good judgment on the part of this House to announce to the world that a large portion of the people of this country are in a "desperate condition." While of course we have our poor the same as other countries, I think we have a smaller proportion now, and undoubtedly fewer people are at present depending on charity, than ever before in the history of Canada, and certainly no more than in any other part of the world. Therefore, whatever opinions hon. members may entertain, I do not think it would be wise on the part of this House to propound to the world that our people are in a "desperate condition."

Mr. BURNHAM: I am perfectly willing to accept the hon. minister's suggestion and to let the resolution go through as he amends it.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I move that the resolution be amended by striking out the first recital:

—whereas the rise in the price of necessaries is leaving many of the people of Canada in a desperate condition.

Amendment agreed to.

Resolution as amended agreed to.

[Mr. Burnham.]

A NATIONAL EIGHT-HOUR WORKING DAY.

Mr. J. H. BURNHAM (Peterborough) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that to the extent of the jurisdiction of this Parliament a national eight hour working day should be established immediately, subject only to the right of express private contract.

He said: Mr. Speaker, we might as well have a field day on labour questions while we are at it; they do not often adorn the journals of the House. This is a question of establishing what might be called in legal parlance a technical working day. I might illustrate what I mean by saying that if a suit were brought in court to recover wages for so many days, it would be understood that according to law those days would be composed of eight hours each, if not otherwise provided for in writing.

But it is, of course, always necessary that an individual should have the right of compromising, of altering the length of the day, or in some other way qualifying his control of the circumstances under which these contracts are usually given if he wishes. Therefore if a man should say: "I will work to-day fourteen hours or sixteen hours;" that would mean he would get two days' pay, or a proportionate amount of two days' pay. It throws the onus on the employer, instead of leaving it, as at the present time, upon the employee.

This change of onus is a very great advance, Mr. Speaker, and from what I hear I do not think that the employer would object to it at all, and I know that the employee is very desirous of having it brought about.

"One of the contentions of the whole labour world is that it is best for labour, best for the human being, for the comfort and happiness of the people, best for industry, best for the quality of the work, that people should, as a rule, work eight hours a day—if necessary they may work longer on occasions, but eight hours should be the length of the working day. Industrial employers, I think, without exception, philanthropists and social reformers, labour itself—all agree that eight hours is the proper length of time for the standard working day.

We have lately assumed control of great railways. We are taking control of vast public works. We have territories in Canada outside the provinces over which the Dominion has exclusive jurisdiction. We