

express their wishes secretly if they desired. Care was taken to include a number of the mines as to which I was satisfied the relations generally between the owners and the men were good. In nearly all the mines where the ballot was taken I am satisfied that the men as a rule are well treated and not at all dissatisfied in general with the way they are used by their employers. In a number of cases I know a good deal of pains have been taken by the employers to look after the men's welfare. The result of the ballot, however, was to show that even in these cases and in cases where the men did not belong to any miners' organization nearly all the men desired the eight hour law, 332 ballots being returned in favor of it and only 12 against it. Six of the ballots marked for it, however, had the words "with a minimum wage" written upon them, and 3 of those marked against it asked for a 9 hour day. The most significant feature in regard to this ballot was the fact that where the men are paid by the piece and depend for the amount of their pay on the amount of work they can do in a day they are almost as strongly for the law as in the places where the pay is by the day, and before the vote was taken the difference in their position as compared with other places and the effect the proposed law would have in reducing their pay, unless they could do as much work in eight hours as they are now doing in ten, was carefully pointed out and explained to them. As expressed at some of the meetings, the feeling of the men seemed to be "get the law passed anyway and see about the matter of pay afterwards."

The chief grounds urged are as follows: First, the humanitarian aspect—that working underground is working under unnatural and trying conditions, being away from the surface and the sunlight and in air more or less impure and inferior to the natural air, being often contaminated with fumes of gas and with injurious dust or particles from the drilling and other operations. They complain at Cobalt that the hydraulic air used in a large number of the mines there is not as good as the air of the ordinary compressor. It is a frequent occurrence they say in underground mines to have men overcome by gas from the blasting powder and sometimes to lose their lives thereby, and they say headache and sickness from the powder are common. They say that the work is dangerous and a strain on the system, and that the working places are often wet or damp and the work usually strenuous and more exhausting and harder on the constitution than similar work would be on the surface, and that the mining life of an underground miner is short. They claim that eight hours efficient work is all the ordinary man is capable of, and that exhaustion or dulling of faculties causes accidents to be more frequent in the latter part of a long shift. They point to the various other mining countries where the 8 hour law is in force, and ask why Ontario should not be as good as these. Some say that a better and more efficient class of men would be induced to come into Ontario if the hours of labor were as favorable as in British Columbia and the Western States. Many say that those who oppose reduction of hours think only of dividends and are willing to sacrifice the health of the men for money.

Others say they are in favor of the eight hour law because it is in conformity with the principles of socialism, and many frankly state that their object is to get as short hours and as much pay as possible.

Most of the men also claim that with proper system and management as much work can be done in eight hours as is now done in nine or ten, and that there would be no decrease in the output of the mines or increase in the cost of production. There will always, they say, be objections made to any change in existing conditions, and they claim that the cries of injury to the industry raised in other places when the law was being put in force there have proved ill-founded.