

down production, and it can best be illustrated by a few words about absenteeism. Thinking of ways and means, I would bring this subject as forcibly as I possibly can to the attention of Canada and of the minister. Absenteeism does not produce wages; if wages are not produced the income tax on the wages does not flow into the treasury of Canada. Absenteeism, which has become rampant in Canada and the United States, has created one of the most serious problems which we face. I quote from an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* of Saturday, February 27, headed "Lost Time in War Work." It states:

Habitual absence from work in war industry, according to a report of the United States House Naval Committee, constitutes "a very ugly situation." Judging from reports that continue to be made, the absentee habit in war plants in Canada amounts to very much the same thing.

The U.S. committee admitted itself unable to say why this offence against production has become so prevalent. The *New York Herald Tribune* has attempted to enlighten the committee. It offers "a very simple explanation of the phenomenon," to wit:

It is that we are spoiling our war workers with wages which most of them never before dreamed of earning. They can get now in a third or half the time what they were accustomed to finding in their pay envelopes at the end of a full week. . . . Since the worker to-day has less of an outlet for his greater pay than he had for what he used to make, one powerful incentive to keep his nose to the grindstone is missing. The principal luxury remaining to him is leisure. So he buys that. It is a simple explanation. In fact, it is a little too simple. To suggest that war plant workers absent themselves merely because they are paid higher wages than were available before the war is to place their patriotism at a rather low level and to pass over a mass of other reasons that are varied and complex.

But beyond question there is a considerable amount of absenteeism that comes from high wages and temporary economic security. In normal times the cultivation of leisure is not necessarily an evil. But in times like the present it is different. The remedy is not lower wages, however, but the application of rules that will bring home to slackers the importance of their full-time cooperation in the war effort. In Britain, a worker who stays away from his job one shift is required to give an acceptable reason. Otherwise he is liable to a fine. If he persists, he can be jailed. If this sounds drastic, let it be remembered that the fight for survival is far from having been won . . . and the fighting men cannot go absent whenever they feel inclined to take it easy.

It is time that the rules applying to men in the armed forces should be made to apply to all the rest of us while the war is on. We have a similar situation in Canada, but the cause is largely improvident taxation. I would ask the minister to bear with me a few minutes while I substantiate what I say.

[Mr. J. H. Harris.]

Mrs. NIELSEN: May I interrupt the hon. member? I am sorry to say that down at this end of the chamber we cannot hear a word he is saying.

Mr. GARDINER: We cannot hear it over here, either.

Mr. HARRIS (Danforth): May I pay my respect to the hon. member for her kind thought. The same thought was running through my mind. Perhaps in view of the fact that what I am going to say is very important we might have just a little more order in the house. To those who cannot hear what I say I suggest that they gather around my knee, so that I shall not have to strain my voice.

I should like to put on record a few observations which to my mind are sufficiently constructive to assist in increased production by labour, and the removal of one of the worst menaces to our production schedules. It is commonly called absenteeism. Labour is not to blame for absenteeism; the major portion of the responsibility lies directly on the shoulders of the administration. This condition arises because the taxation brought down in the last budget has made it easy for labour to stay away from their places of employment during these extra hours that we are exhorting them all to put at the disposal of the country to increase our war effort. I will recite the problem and make a suggestion as to how it might be adequately met, without any undue hardship on the honest and patriotic employee. In fact I am of the opinion that the income tax rate on that portion of labour which is paying income tax could be considerably reduced and at the same time more man-hours of work be given by employees to their country. Under last year's legislation this is what actually happened.

An employee who is single without any dependents and works a full week of 48 hours at 60 cents per hour has a pay of \$28.80 a week. To simplify the computation I am omitting the sixty cents paid as cost of living bonus. He pays an income tax thereon of \$4.90, deducted at the source. Part of that, it is true, is savings. If that same employee works a 40-hour week at one place of employment, namely five days only, he pays an income tax of \$3.56 a week. If he works four days a week he pays an income tax of only \$2.27 a week. It will be seen at once that he would be better off to work the full six days rather than the four or five days; but at the same time his income tax is doubled if he works six days a week rather than four. Rather than give to the government the extra