

sonal satisfaction, I studied that problem and I consider it my duty, Mr. Speaker, to state my views on the matter at this critical period of our political history. If it be intolerable for the workingman to remain the dumb servant of capital, it is to my mind just as intolerable that honestly earned capital should be made the slave of its servant. If it be unfair that the workingman should be deprived of what is righteously coming to him, it is equally unfair that capital should be compelled by a man or a body of men to pay for that labour an exorbitant price. There is, then, or there should be a neutral ground where both parties can meet as friends. Would the granting of the eight hours' day solve the difficulty? I do not believe it; I am even inclined to think that it would make things worse.

Manual labour is not exhausting; it is a necessity of our condition, and we should accept it submissively. Please bear in mind that farmers work from ten to fifteen hours a day; and in support of my previous statement, I may add that farmers on an average live longer than any other class of society. So I say that a long day's work is not a factor of physical degeneracy. Besides, to my mind it is entirely misleading to say, whatever statistics you may have in support, that a man, or machinery, can accomplish more in eight hours' than in ten hours' time. The result would be an increase in the cost of production, and necessarily an increase in the price of commodities of all kinds.

Now, if there are in the world products whose selling price varies greatly and fluctuates in sympathy with market quotations, there are others whose value varies little, as a rule. I mean farm products. Were we to create a condition of things, whereby the cost of production of these farm products may be possibly largely increased, while on the other hand, market quotations remain unaltered, very soon we would be face to face with a serious crisis throughout the world. For the farming population represent the majority of the country, represent the most important and the most useful of industries, and if we compel farmers to restrict their efforts to supplying their own wants, what will become of the country? It is an utter impossibility for the farmer to get as much work, not to speak of more work, from a man working a smaller number of hours; accordingly, the cost of production will increase too rapidly and his business will be imperilled.

It is contended that the eight-hour rule will not be applicable to farming, that it will be applied only as regards public works. But once the door is opened, where shall we stop? Why should not the same privilege be claimed in other quarters? To my mind, this proposal is a dangerous one,

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and should be considered with a cool head and great caution by all working-men as well as public men.

Of course, there are exceptions to all rules; certain kinds of work cannot by common consent, be performed for ten or eight hours in secession. Such cases are known, recognized, and nobody thinks of applying to them another rule. The child who is not fully developed should, when called upon to work for a living, or as a help to his family, be protected against protracted exertion which might break down his constitution. So also, the young woman should be protected against excessive labour until she has acquired her full development. All are agreed as to that. But, as regards a fully developed man or woman, why should they not be let free to use their own judgment in the matter and exert themselves to the full limit of their power? Instead of endeavouring to have a general shortening of the day's work, why not lay down as a rule that, the work being paid so much an hour, whoever is anxious to work longer hours will be free to do so. A strong and healthy man will work longer hours; he will earn more money, there will be greater inducement for him to exert himself, his family will be benefited thereby, and everything will go on more smoothly. Farmers work ten or fifteen hours a day and live older than others who work less.

The labouring man, in the workshop, or elsewhere, like the sturdy farmer, led onward by his strong common sense and his fondness of comfort, will work longer hours without impairing his health and with profit for his future. Then, the price of labour being established at its real value per hour, the capital, whether agricultural or manufacturing, will have its share of justice and the equilibrium will be thoroughly established in the cost of living. No more strikes, with their financial disasters and their accompanying scenes of more or less sinister nature; no more of those continuous recriminations which too often bring trade to a standstill and indirectly paralyze business?

Supposing the value of this idea to be acknowledged, who shall determine the price of labour?

Why, simply a labour commission, composed of able men taken from all classes of the community, where the workmen will be represented. This commission, holding permanent session, each year, revising its schedules of the value of labour, which would be accepted by all interested parties, would govern labour, untrammelled by political control, and would deal fairly with all classes of the community.

Mr. Speaker, such is, to my mind, the only way to give justice to the working-