

Workmen's Compensation in Great Britain

It is now over a year since the Home Office Departmental Committee on the Workmen's Compensation Insurance set to work in London to consider the best system of Compensation Insurance to meet modern ideas and conditions and from advice which we have just received before going to press it appears that the Committee have now issued their report on the subject. This report is apparently a voluminous one stating clearly the arguments for and against as well as the decisions of the Committee in all important features.

The outstanding result of the Committee's deliberations is that after a thorough investigation of the various systems in vogue in Foreign Countries, particularly the United States, as well as in various parts of the British Empire, it has been decided that the State Compensation method is wrong. It is still more striking to find that in arriving at this decision the Labor Interests were with the Committee.

We say that this decision is outstanding having in view the tremendous propaganda which has been inspired from interested quarters on this Continent and elsewhere for State Insurance and the manner in which well informed people including the Labor Interests have been hoodwinked into accepting it. Any wave of reform be its benefits real or imaginary generally gathers impetus as it reaches new spheres and in the earlier stages of the British Committee's inquiries it appeared to us that there was a possibility that they might have been swept off their feet by the sort of propaganda that has taken place on this Continent.

British Institutions have been built up and are still being constructed by a gradual process of evolution and there is little of the see-saw, hit or

miss legislation that is found in many other States. The preliminaries to a new form of legislation in Workmen's Compensation was a most thorough and searching inquiry into the methods followed and results obtained in other countries. Mature consideration has brought the Committee down to the final decision, apparently with all interests substantially in agreement with them, that subject to a few important changes for the benefit of employees and a general overhauling of the scale of compensation, the present system is the right one and State Insurance is wrong.

After all it is only natural that such a thorough investigation of the conditions concerning State Insurance should lead to a decision of the kind. State Compensation Insurance struck at the very heart of Democratic Civilization and particularly at British Institutions. The placing in the hands of any man or Commission the right of taxation and the right to distribute monies untrammelled by the Law Courts is a terrible thing to contemplate. No doubt in a time of great emergency such procedure can be used as an efficient way of giving substantial justice to a majority of the people but the same system as a permanent institution can be made a powerful engine of coercion, politically or otherwise.

When the full report of the Committee comes to hand we will have more to say on the subject. In the meantime it would appear that a very valuable chapter has now been added to the history of Workmen's Compensation Insurance, and in view of the fact that all Democratic countries have gradually modelled their legislation on the lines of the British Compensation Laws it is reasonable to suppose that the latest report will be given very serious consideration by legislators in Canada and elsewhere.

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