

The only apparent explanation can be found in the 4,000 reasons referred to above.

The principal arguments adduced by the men in favour of the change are: That underground work is unnatural and trying; that the hydraulic air used in Cobalt is "not as good as the air of the ordinary compressor;" and that eight hours of work is the longest continuous period in which efficiency can be maintained. To these claims it may be answered that underground work is no more "unnatural" than work in any building, or on a ship, or on a locomotive. And, as a matter of fact, it is infinitely more wholesome and much more remunerative than the majority of vocations. As to the implication that the hydraulically compressed air used in many Cobalt mines is detrimental to the health, we may frankly say that we do not believe it. That eight hours of efficient work is all the ordinary man is capable of, may or may not be true. This depends much upon the men, and to some extent upon the manager. It is demonstrable, however, that under present conditions it is practically impossible to be sure of more than six, or at most, seven hours of actual labour from the men. Supervision of underground labour is costly and difficult. This is a point that has been overlooked by Mr. Price.

The mine managers, according to Mr. Price, were practically unanimous in opposing the eight-hour day. Less than half a dozen managers were wholly in favour of it. Others signified their approval of the change if the hours were to be calculated "face to face." It was specifically pointed out that an eight-hour day would induce a reduction of wages and much dissatisfaction among the men. That, further, it would decrease outputs and lessen profits, and that many low grade deposits would be removed from the category of commercial possibilities. The contention that underground labour is injurious to the health was flatly contradicted by the managers. And in this last item they had, beyond doubt, by far the best of the argument. But, as noted before in these columns, the statement that Cobalt has reason to fear competition with Mexican silver producers is vain and foolish.

In reviewing the whole matter, Mr. Price expresses the belief that no one can predict what the effect of the enactment of an eight-hour law will be. A slight increase in the cost of production will, he admits, be probable. It will not, however, have any serious effect. Amongst the specific ills to be feared is the growth of miners' phthisis, a disease not at present known in Ontario mines. Parenthetically, we would like to ask Mr. Price how an eight-hour day can prevent the development of this malady? The steps to be taken for its prevention are well known. They consist chiefly in the application of water sprays for allaying drill dust. The mechanical devices necessary can be adopted whenever occasion arises.

Mr. Price admits that there is not an abnormal percentage of sickness amongst the miners. But, in dis-

cussing the relative healthfulness of underground work, he entirely omits consideration of the fact that the miner is not exposed during working hours to inclement weather and to variations of temperature. In fact, year in and year out the miner works in an atmosphere the temperature of which is practically standardized. This applies particularly to Ontario mines, none of which are deep enough to develop an appreciable increment of temperature.

Space forbids us to touch upon many of the points brought forward in the report. Suffice it to say that there is every evidence of painstaking care. It is observable, however, that Mr. Price, in his summation of conclusions, has been at some pains to labour those points that are in favour of the proposed change. This may be illustrated by one paragraph: "I think there is something, too, in the contention that the shorter day would tend to greater skill and efficiency of the men, and that by improving conditions it would encourage a more permanent class of residents in the mining camps and lessen the very large remittances of wages now sent out of the country by those having no established home here."

From the tone of this paragraph we are led to conclude that Mr. Price forgot the important fact that his function was primarily judicial. He seems to be not the judge but the advocate.

METAL MINE ACCIDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Comparative statistics show that fatal accidents in the metal mines of the United States are deplorably numerous. During the calendar year 1911, for instance, of the 165,979 men employed in the metal mines of the States, 695 were killed, a rate of 4.19 per 1,000 men employed. In the Transvaal, where labour is less intelligent, the rate is higher, 4.29 per 1,000. But in Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain, Australia, Japan and other countries it is markedly lower. The lowest rates obtain in New Zealand and Australia, where records show less than one man killed per 1,000 men employed.

As might be expected from the nature of the work, the great preponderance of metal mine fatalities mean the death of one man at a time, rarely more than ten or twelve. In coal mines the majority of reported accidents are catastrophes involving the deaths of scores.

The copper mines of the United States employ about 30,000 men underground. In these mines the death rate from accidents is 5.33 per 1,000 men employed. In the iron mines the rate is 4.29; in the zinc and lead mines, 3.43; in gold and other metal mines, 3.95; while in other mineral mines the rate is 1.73.

Striking a general average for all mines other than coal mines, falls of rock from roof or wall accounted during 1911, for 27.48% of all underground fatalities; explosions for 8.92%; haulage accidents for 2.88%;