

Little has been done up to the present, time, in favour of the lower classes, compared with the considerable and important legislation passed by parliament in the way of endowing capital and the higher classes of the community. However I must say that the Liberal party has done a great deal more in that direction than our friends of the opposition when in power, and I am particularly pleased in availing myself of this opportunity of congratulating the Hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Lemieux) for having erected on a broad basis of justice, a tribunal where industrial conflicts can be settled and where labour and capital can meet and come to terms.

I fully understand that the eight hour agitation may be rather premature, and may be a source of difficulties to the government, its present bearings on production and wages being matters of serious study and discussion. But the economic current which it indicates is a sure guarantee of its coming sooner or later to a favourable issue, and Liberalism, I venture to say, would inspire a strong feeling of admiration and attachment to those who have partly in their hands the destiny of Canada, if shorter hours of labour were granted.

Mr. GIRARD (Chicoutimi and Saguenay). (Translation.) Mr. Speaker, the question brought up by my hon. friend from Maison-neuve (Mr. Verville) is indeed one of the most important which this House can have to deal with, since every country in the world is up against that labour question which at times shakes society to its very foundations.

My hon. friend is a mechanic by trade, and as president of the labour congress, and a member of this House, from a constituency wherein the labour vote has a controlling influence, he may justly claim to be the representative of the Canadian labour element. His experience is great, his information large, and his opinion consequently must carry great weight with his hearers who have not so thoroughly gone into the study of the question. Accordingly, I am sure the government have listened to his remarks with becoming respect. However, I understand he is particularly anxious to have his views discussed; for thereby will there be greater light thrown on the subject and will the class of men whose interests he champions obtain a greater measure of assistance and justice. I listened with great attention to the speech so well prepared which he has just delivered. My turn of mind and my requirements put me in sympathy with his views, and I am ready as he is to make the sacrifice of my interests for the sake of improving the condition of the working classes of this country. I deplore myself, as he does, and as they do, the errors and un-

fairness of capitalists; I hate, as he does, and as they do, the idea of being another man's slave, the servant of a fellow man endeavouring to get out of me as much as he can; I deplore, as he does, and as they do, the state of things whereby I am doomed to be a pauper during my life time, while next to me extravagance is making a foolish display of luxury, oftentimes the result of graft, of lawlessness, even of crime, all things which from time to time cause a feeling of revolt, a desire of asserting one's rights, with, as a final result, in the near future possibly, a world-wide disaster.

Society is by degrees getting out of kilter, and it does not seem as though the Creator in his impenetrable wisdom had wished that there should exist such a wide gulf between the various classes of men as is found to-day between an oppressive millionaire and a miserable pauper, his victim. Therefore an effort should be made to restore society to its normal state without, of course, doing away with that diversity of conditions, inseparable from the social life of human beings associated for a common object, dealing fairly between themselves, helping one another as brothers and fellow workers should do, and seeing to it that every one gets his share of the good things of the world as remuneration for his quota of intelligence, energy and labour. Such is the aim of the member for Maisonneuve, and I say it is sublime and patriotic. One way of dealing fairly with the working men, he says, would be to shorten the hours of work. In support of that contention he supplied well prepared data, and suggested that the principle might be applied to begin with in connection with public works paid out of the public chest, that is in part out of the pocket of the working-man himself.

Mr. Speaker, I am myself a working-man. I worked by the day, ten hours a day, at a salary of 80 cents a day, and I worked as a farmer on my farm. I worked also in factories. Many factories have I visited and I know farm work as a practical farmer must know it. I am also acquainted with lumbering and the work of the shantyman; I have been at various periods of my life employer as well as employee. My father was a working-man himself, a farmer all his life. My connections and my experiences are those of working-men, and I have the honour to represent here a community made up for the most part of farmers, intermixed with quite a number of shantymen and mill men, the majority of whom are in close sympathy with me and I with them, as in honour bound.

In the course of the last twenty years I spent in public life, I have often heard that great labour problem dealt with by various persons, in all stations and classes of society. Quietly, and for my own per-