

which his representatives in this House are in duty bound to protect as far as possible.

I am satisfied this Bill does not contain a single provision inimical to the public interest, on the other hand, it extends relief to a numerous class of our people. Besides, I am satisfied that the hon. member for Maisonneuve when vindicating in this House the rights of labour, is in complete sympathy with the labouring classes. I know that he is a member of some powerful labour associations, he having been for some time one of their most prominent and active officers, and when he raises his voice in this House it is their sentiments he expresses, he is the true exponent of the views of labour.

Now, one more consideration should not be lost sight of. As we are aware, laws should not have for their object to safeguard the interests of one class exclusively, and I believe that legislation as it is makes rather for the protection of employers. Some attention should be given to the working classes. Should we not do something towards relieving them from over-exertion, and too much misery, should we not strive to improve their moral and physical conditions? Such is the view which I take, and I object to the dilatory proposal made by the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie), who suggests the opening of a protected investigation, the effect of which would be the postponement of the settlement of this question if not indefinitely, at least to such a date when likely all of us would have disappeared from parliament before having been given in the meantime an opportunity to vote on the question. By referring the Bill to the Committee of the Whole the object we have in view will be attained. There shall we consider it, and subject it to a fair criticism, sufficient at any rate to enlighten the government and justify them in trying an experiment which shall give results of an instructive character. It will always be an easy matter to change the law if experience shows that it is in opposition to public interest. However, as already stated, that experiment has been tried in one department, I mean in the Department of Marine at Quebec, where the men are required to work only eight hours per day at certain seasons, and that experiment has given satisfactory results. They are of a nature to induce us to vote in favour of this Bill, and accordingly lay down as a rule that men employed in public works shall not be required to put in more than eight hours work a day. That is, to my mind, what should be done.

Mr. E. N. RHODES (Cumberland). I have given more or less attention to the subject of an eight hour day, even before I became a member of this House, and the
Mr. TURCOTTE.

result of my reading, together with direct experience of the conditions of labour, have led me into a position of absolute sympathy with the movement of the labour men to secure what is known as a uniform eight hour day. I approve of the principle of an eight hour day, and of the movement which has been inaugurated by organized labour in this and other countries to secure an eight hour day. The objections that have been offered to this measure to-day have been largely technical, legal objections. The hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie), while in favour of an eight hour day on government buildings alone, is not in favour of this measure, because he says it goes too far. He, in common with many other hon. gentlemen, go upon the assumption that an eight hour day would mean that you would only get eight-tenths as much work in a given space of time. I think hon. gentlemen forget the fact that for years this eight hour day has been in force in various countries. They have it in British Columbia; in Victoria the eight hour day is practically universal. I have in my hand a very excellent work entitled 'Eight hours for work,' written by Mr. John Rae, M.A., published by MacMillan and Company, and I think this is the work from which the hon. member for Maisonneuve (Mr. Verville) obtained the material for his speech last session. At the end of the book, I find a chapter entitled 'The eight hour day in Victoria,' and the author quotes figures tending to show the effect of the introduction of the eight hour day there. If the House will permit me, I would like to read two short extracts showing the effect of such a day in operation in Victoria. Speaking from the figures, he says:

They show the utter folly of the assumption, so much pressed by the more ignorant advocates of an Eight-hours Bill, that the shortening of the day of labour has the necessary, certain, and uniform effect of abolishing the unemployed.

On the whole the reduction of the working day to eight hours has had no very sensible influence on the numbers of the unemployed in Victoria any more than on the rate of wages, and both these circumstances point to the conclusion, to which other and more direct evidence also conducts, that shortening the day has exercised but very inconsiderable effect on the amount of the workmen's production. A shortening of hours has always two immediate effects—it improves the mettle of the masters, and it improves the mettle of the men. The masters set themselves at once to practise economics of various sorts, to make more efficient arrangements of the work, to introduce better machinery or to speed the old, to try the double shift and other expedients to maintain and even augment the production of their works. The men return to their toil in better heart after their ampler rest, reinvigorated both in nerve and muscle, and make up in the result sometimes in part,