Interference of Foreign Officials.

As will be seen by the evidence already detailed, the question of how far there should be legislation directed against foreign interference with Canadian workmen comes up squarely for consideration.

The evidence presents two classes of interference: one, that of procuring and inciting to quit work by the foreign agitator in person; and the other, the case of officials of international or other organizations who remain in the foreign country, but who procure and incite by means of other officials within Canada, and who assume the control and direction of Canadian workmen until the termination of the dispute.

As has already been said, it should not be tolerated that Canadian industries should be subject to the dictation of foreigners who know no law, so far as such industries are concerned, but their own desires, and whose business and avowed object it is to keep up unceasing friction between the employer and employed, and who are not trade unionists, but socialistic agitators of the most bigoted and ignorant type. We therefore think that it is necessary for Parliament to interfere in the direction of making it an offence, punishable, in minor cases, on summary conviction before a county judge or police or stipendiary magistrate, by fine or imprisonment, and in graver cases, on conviction by indictment, by imprisonment only, for any person not a British subject, and who has not been residing in the province for at least one year, to procure or incite any employee or employees in Canada to quit the employment without the consent of the employer; or for any person within Canada to exhibit or publish, or in any way communicate to any employee or employees the contents of any order, request, suggestion or recommendation, (or any document purporting to be a copy thereof), by any person or persons ordinarily resident without Canada, that he or they quit the employment as aforesaid, whether such order, request, suggestion or recommendation, or copy thereof is signed, or purports to be signed by such person or persons on his or their own behalf, or on behalf of any other person, or of any association of persons, whether incorporated or not.

The testimony before us showed practical unanimity on the part of the intelligent and strong minded members of the labouring classes that foreign agitators and their methods were not wanted, in fact, as one of them put it, they regarded it as an insult that such proposals should be made to them by any outsiders.

Violation of Contracts.

The testimony shows that it is necessary to penalize the wanton violation of contracts as well as the sympathetic strike. The older unions for the most part show a commendable appreciation of their obligations in this regard, but some of the recently organized bodies have shown little or no such appreciation, which is probably due to the fact that while they felt a new sense of power their was no sense of responsibility. We would, therefore, suggest that the courts be clothed with power to disincorporate any incorporated union and to declare illegal any unincorporated organization which is shown to have violated any contract without colour of right, or to have gone out on sympathetic strike. This, of course, would not authorize the court to give such a judgment where any reasonable justification is given in defence of the conduct impugned.

Blacklisting.

It was alleged by counsel for the United Brotherhood that the Canadian Pacific Company was privy to a blacklisting scheme, in common with other railway companies in North America, and some evidence was given to show that certificates of service, called 'clearances', did not always fairly state the cause of dismissal. Time did not admit of full investigation into this matter, and the charge respecting blacklisting to other railway companies of the names of employees who had been engaged in a strike, was vigorously repudiated by the officers of the company.

Some evidence was also given to show that employers were beginning to move in the direction of combining to boycott and blacklist men participating in strikes, and one witness swore that before he could obtain lumber from a saw-mill he had to satisfy the Builders' Exchange that certain strikers would not be employed on the building. Neither could this matter be fully investigated, but assuming that employers are combining in this way, it is the natural counter move to the 'unfair" list, the boycott and the sympathetic strike, and equally reprehensible and wrong, and ought equally with them to be declared unlawful. Employers should also be required, if asked, to fully and accurately state the cause of dismissal in the 'clearance', and not leave it open to be inferred that the employee was guilty of some misconduct which would debar him from securing other employment when the real cause was such as to leave it at least open to question as to whether or not the dismissal was wrongful.

Hours of Labour.

During the sittings of the Commission a strike took place among the operators in the saw-mills and planing mills in Vancouver and New Westminster, which we were asked by them to investigate, but we were unable to do so. The demand was for a shortening of hours from 10 hours to 9, with Saturday afternoons off and without reduction of pay, and a memorandum was handed in to show that the product is sold on the average at about three times its cost. As the employers have not filed any statement, we cannot pretend to pass on the merits of this dispute, but we think that much good would result by legislation moving in the direction of the shortening of hours. In these days, when the human energies are strained to their utmost amid whirling dust and machinery, long hours are a crime against nature. The machine should be the servant of man, and not man the slave of the machine. One of the most legitimate modes in which a legislature can aid in improving the condition of the workmen is by the shortening of hours. Of course this ought to be done gradually, and after carefully taking into account the conditions of the particular industry in other countries so as not to transfer it elsewhere, or drive it out of our own country. If it could be brought to pass that the workman would have to work only long enough so as to make his work a pleasurable exercise, instead of an exhausting toil, and at the same time secure a comfortable living, society will have advanced a long way towards the millenium.

These then are the opinions and conclusions which we have formed after the perusal of some two thousand pages of evidence and a large mass of documents and correspondence; and while the inquiry might have taken a wider scope and been more searching and thorough than the time allotted us permitted, yet we do not think it likely, that we should have reached any different conclusions on the points of importance. At the same time we feel quite free to admit that, while much good can be accomplished by wise legislation, the labour problem, so-called, is incapable of final solution, and that it will be with us as long as human nature remains what it is, and present civilization endures.

Dated at Victoria,
this eighth day of July, 1903.

(Sd.) GORDON HUNTER,
ELLIOTT S. ROWE.
Commissioners.