

informed also that it is claimed by the managers of the mines in Ontario which are working on an 8 or a 9 hour basis that their costs are as low as those of 10 hour mines, and western shiftbosses and mine captains working in the Ontario mines claim that they can get as much work done in 8 hours as in 10. It is stated and admitted on nearly all sides that the amount of work done generally in the Ontario mines is not satisfactory for the time that is spent at it, and that in fact the efficiency of a great many of the men is not as high as it should be.

What the effect of the enactment of an 8 hour law would really be no one of course can definitely say. As pointed out in the report of the Miners' Eight Hour Day Committee in Great Britain in 1907, much would likely depend on the spirit in which the law was received and the efforts made to adapt operations to the new conditions, and to minimize friction between the men and the employers. Probably upon the whole the conclusion that would be most warranted is that while results might vary in different places or under different circumstances and while there might probably, generally speaking, be some increase in cost of production, the increase which may reasonably be feared is slight.

The fact that little or no injury would likely result to the industry or that the mine owners are able to stand a diminution of profits is no ground for a change or disturbance of conditions unless other reasons warrant or require it. Neither on the other hand I think would even material decrease in output and profits be reason for refusing the law if the conditions in regard to the health and welfare of the workers were so serious as imperatively to require it.

Turning to the latter question, I am convinced that the popular idea of hardship and injuriousness of working underground is only partly right. The mines of Ontario, I believe, as a whole, are naturally as healthful as any in the world. Figures and opinions show that there is little in the assertions regarding arsenic poisoning in the Cobalt mines, though, no doubt, through infection, that does in a few instances occur. There seems, however, to be better basis for the fear of harm arising from the breathing of the dust caused by the drilling and other operations, and especially from the hammer drills where no water is used to allay the dust, and particularly in the quartz workings. Phthisis or miners' consumption is at present a disease little known in Ontario, but the time has been short for its development and it is undoubtedly a matter to be considered and as far as possible guarded against. Our inspectors are fully alive to this necessity and no doubt will do their best to minimize the evil, but I may here mention that one of their difficulties is that the men are not always as willing as they should be to co-operate in precautionary measures. It is undoubtedly true that there is a good deal of powder gas in many of our mines and that this causes considerable trouble, and is more or less harmful even where the men are not actually overcome by it and no fatality occurs thereby. I think it cannot be questioned either that underground mining though not the most hazardous of occupations, must be distinctly classed as a hazardous one. The allegation of greater frequency of accidents in the latter hours of shifts I find after very careful investigation, assisted by the hospital records and other figures produced by the managers, and especially by the data put together for me by Chief Inspector Corkill, is not borne out by the facts. The figures really show that a rather larger percentage of the accidents take place during the early hours of the shift than during the later hours. Reports and opinions do not on the other hand confirm the allegation that shorter hours and consequent speeding up would be likely to increase accidents. Hospital records do not show a large percentage of sickness among the miners. The Commissioners in the British