

what some hon. gentlemen call this weak measure and make it applicable generally throughout Canada to all sorts of industrial establishments.

Mr. CLARKE. Why should you have any objection to this measure being applied to other industrial establishments if it depends on public opinion?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. There are a great many measures that might be passed but it is usual for legislatures to wait until public opinion is reasonably ripe before thrusting them upon an unwilling public. If public opinion were against this mode of treatment, then, to proceed with undue haste might set back the movement rather than accelerate it. There is such a thing as making haste too fast and if, later on, public opinion, from the working of this measure in regard to railways, comes to the conclusion that it will be beneficially extended and made more general that extension will take place and good will come from it, but if we had a large part of the public perhaps resisting it we would be forcing it upon an unwilling public. There is nobody in this House who can speak for the employers of labour and say that they would consent to this measure. There is no member of this House who will say that even the employees would consent to this principle being made general. I, however, believe that a considerable number of them throughout the country would welcome it, but it is impossible for any one to get up in this House and say that the general public want this measure to be extended and to have general application.

Mr. CLARKE. Might I ask the hon. minister on what authority does he say that no person in this House can speak as to the opinion entertained by the employers of labour as to whether the extension of this principle to their different crafts would be acceptable or not?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I think there is no member of this House who has any authority to speak on behalf of the employers of labour in Canada. I am not aware that the employers of labour have met and expressed an opinion upon this subject. If they have and if there is any one who could speak on their behalf, no one would rejoice more than myself at such an announcement, and I am sure the hon. member for Toronto (Mr. Clarke) would agree with me.

Mr. CLARKE. It will be a pleasure to me to agree with the hon. gentleman, though it will be a hard matter sometimes.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I am sure my hon. friend will agree with me at the present moment that even he, however well informed he is as to the state of public opinion, either in the ranks of the employers or in those of the employees, and however

courageous he may be, will not at this moment undertake to speak on behalf of either one and to say that either one would give his consent to the extension of this principle.

Mr. CLARKE. The hon. minister is certainly right in saying that I would not undertake to speak for either party, for the employers or the employees. I am sure that every person on this side of the House earnestly desires that all the good the hon. minister expects from this Bill may be accomplished and more than accomplished. I understand from what the hon. gentleman said during the explanation which he made upon the second reading of the Bill, that he had consulted all the employers and employees who will be affected by the operation of this Bill when it becomes enacted. That being the case, and anticipating, as the hon. gentleman does, and I hope rightly anticipating, great benefit from the passage of this Bill, surely if it is to be of any practical benefit to both employers and employees it was the duty of the hon. gentleman to instruct some officer, or officers, of the Department of Labour, to ascertain from employers of labour other than those engaged in conducting railways, and from employees other than those engaged on railways, what their opinion would be if general legislation of this kind were passed instead of legislation applying solely to the operation of railways. If there is to be any benefit derived from the operation of this Bill in its application to railways, why not extend the benefit to others? Why not to steamers, why not to those large industrial establishments scattered all through the country, why not have all these great industries brought under the operation of this Bill? Surely there has been a dereliction of duty on the part of the officers of the Department of Labour, if not on the part of the hon. minister—I say it, of course, with a great deal of respect—in not taking steps to ascertain what the opinion of the employers of labour and of the employees in Canada is as to the general application to other industrial establishments of the principles of this Bill.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The hon. gentleman has been in public life many years. He is well aware that public opinion is not obtained in regard to great legislative measures by any such procedure as that. You could not send out a bulletin to five or six million people and ask them what their opinion is on a proposed measure. There is a well recognized way of ascertaining public opinion. Subjects are discussed in the House, in the country, on the platform and in the press and gradually public men come to form an opinion as to what is the will of the people, and from their places in parliament they make their opinions known. If the hon. gentleman who is in touch with public opinion

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