

more limited in its scope and have the experiment tried on public works, properly so-called.

I agree with the hon. member for South Toronto (Mr. Macdonell) that we do not know enough of the subject to legislate on it intelligently. I have read the many reports of investigations and commissions which have taken place in the United States during the past five or six years. They are very voluminous documents. Manufacturers from all parts of the United States were summoned to express their views, the transportation magnates, the heads of all the labour organizations, appeared before that commission, and yet I do not believe that in the United States they have got any way near a satisfactory conclusion up to the present. If we are going to proceed with this measure—and I think it is entitled to the same consideration as every other public Bill—it should be referred to a special commission with power to examine the various interests to be affected. The Bill is entitled to fair consideration and the House is entitled to the fullest information before being asked to pass on the strict terms of the measure itself.

Mr. MIDDLEBRO. The promoter of this Bill wants to reduce the hours of labour from ten to eight. But suppose I am a government contractor and this Bill becomes law, and I am paying my men \$2 a day for a ten hour day. Under the provisions of this Bill, I would have to shorten the day to eight hours and I would reduce my wages to \$1.60 per day. How would the hon. gentleman meet a case of that kind?

Mr. VERVILLE. I do not believe that we have any right to deal with the question of wages. There is nothing in the Bill that speaks of wages. If it should become law, it would be up to the employer to pay whatever he believed right, and it would be up to the men to insist on being paid what they deemed just.

Mr. A. S. GOODEVE (Kootenay). I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. member for Maisonneuve (Mr. Verville) in introducing this Bill. I have read also the hon. member's remarks on introducing a similar Bill last session. The hon. member has gone to a good deal of trouble in carrying out research upon this question, and in bringing before the House facts concerning the hours of labour. In the province of British Columbia, in the year 1901, we dealt to some extent with this question in relation to the mines. Then, as now, there was the struggle between the two great parties interested, the employer on one side and the workmen on the other. But we were fortunate in that we introduced then an eight-hour law, and I am glad

Mr. GUTHRIE.

to be able to testify here that the results of the operation of that law have been eminently satisfactory. I can state from personal knowledge that, up to the introduction of the Eight Hour Bill, in that portion of the country with which I am most familiar, the mining district of the Kootenay, only a small percentage of the labouring men owned their homes, or, apparently, took any interest in their homes. Any one familiar with that district at that time is aware that the homes of miners were usually shacks and the occupants paid little attention to the improvement of the surroundings, or of the home itself. Since the introduction of this eight hour law, that has been greatly changed. A large number of miners have purchased and now own their own homes and are active in improving their surroundings. They have a certain amount of daylight at home, which, under old conditions, they could not have. With the ten hour day in the mines, it meant practically twelve hours, as any one will understand. Men had to rise long before daylight in the morning to get to their work, and they usually did not return until after dark. It was generally said, and very truly, that the men hardly saw their families in daylight from one end of the year to the other. Since the introduction of the eight hour law that has been changed. The effect has been a marked change in the men of the mining district, as I have described. That is an argument that ought to be of weight with the House. Surely, in this advanced age, with our great improvements in machinery and our rapid advance in many lines of economic improvement, the labouring men should have some share in these improvements and the benefits to be derived from them. It has been said that the adoption of such a measure as is here proposed would lead to shortening the hours of labour in other avocations, and it is inferred that it would be detrimental to the agricultural interests. I venture to think the conditions of work in agriculture are altogether different from those of the classes of labour to which this measure is intended to apply. Their harvest makes special demands upon those engaged in agriculture, and during certain seasons they naturally work from daylight till dark. But, during a considerable portion of the year, they have time for recreation and improving their minds. This Bill, if I understand it aright, is meant primarily to apply to those engaged in labour under factory conditions or in the building trades. I have listened with pleasure to the arguments of the hon. member for South Toronto (Mr. Macdonell). Speaking as a layman, it seems to me that the hon. member's argument carries considerable weight. It is right and wise that, in a case of this kind,