

INDEPENDENT OPINION IN ONTARIO.

I have discussed the question of an 8-hour law very fully with our own mine inspectors and other officials and with other disinterested persons familiar with mining conditions. The inspectors, whose efficiency and usefulness I found in my visits to the mines to be held in high respect both by the operators and the men, naturally and properly do not wish unduly to take part in any controversy between the two parties, but their knowledge and experience in these matters and the opportunities they have had for understanding circumstances and conditions are such that it seemed to me imperative to obtain the benefit of their knowledge and opinion. It is chiefly upon the various points arising during the investigation that I have consulted them; some of the information they have given me upon these is more particularly referred to in other parts of the report, but I think it is right to say here that they and the other mining officials with whom I have discussed the eight hour day do not seem to fear evil results from it, and Inspector Sutherland is very strong in the belief that a reasonable eight hour law for underground workers would be beneficial.

I think the weight of well-informed independent opinion is in favor of the law.

REVIEW OF THE MATTER.

From what has already been stated I think it must be concluded that forebodings of disastrous results to the mining industry if an 8 hour bill is enacted are not justified. The mine managers do not produce any figures or evidence in support of their prediction that injury would result, except statements of a number of mining men who attribute their financial difficulties in whole or in part to the 8 hour law, and a reference to the closing down of a number of mines in British Columbia after the 8 hour bill went into effect. Other opinions, however, do not attribute these things to the reduction of the hours of labor. Inspector Sutherland and others think the trouble in British Columbia was due to other causes, and it may be pointed out that returns indicate that the past year's mining operations in British Columbia have been the most profitable in the history of the province. The strongest support I have found in favor of the contention that the mining industry would be injured is the refusal of the Commission on Hours of labor in Nova Scotia in 1910, to recommend the 8 hour day for the coal miners because they believed such a law would undoubtedly add to the cost of operating or seriously reduce wages, and because apparently they feared injury would in consequence result to the coal industry, which as they pointed out had to meet competition from other places.

In the British coal mines the average hours of labor prior to the enactment of the 8 hour law were about the same as we now have in Ontario, and the Commission dealt pretty fully with the matter of reduction of output which the owners claimed would result, and arrived at the conclusion that this would not be so great as claimed though they believed some diminution of production would follow. The actual effects, as already pointed out, seem at least no worse than the Commission anticipated.

With regard to the figures as to drill time submitted by the Cobalt Mine Managers, and the contention based thereon, which is very similar to what was urged by the coal mine operators in Great Britain, I am told by independent persons having knowledge of these matters that there is no reason why the actual drill time should not be a good deal longer than the contention indicates. I am