

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

HOUSE OF COMMONS, ROOM 34,

FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 1910.

The Committee met at eleven o'clock a.m., the Chairman, Hon. Mr. King, presiding.

Professor O. D. Skelton, Queen's University, was present by invitation and addressed the Committee as follows:—

SCOPE OF RESEARCH *re* HOURS OF LABOUR LEGISLATION IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN. What I have gathered I was to do, mainly, was to endeavour to find out what had been done in other countries in introducing the eight-hour day on public works. I should not like at this step to give a definite report on the European or Australasian situation because while I have gone pretty diligently through what material there is to be had in this country, there are a great many details which cannot be obtained except through direct communication, and it will be probably some few weeks before I get complete data on that matter. I might say in general that on the Continent of Europe there is not, so far as I am aware, any legislation covering public contracts. There is, particularly in France, some legislation regarding work done in government establishments such as arsenals and navy yards.

Mr. MACDONELL.—On government works?

Prof. SKELTON.—Within government establishments, not as a rule on government works of the public works kind. In Great Britain the conditions are largely the same. There are no provisions, so far as I have yet been able to gather, for public contracts, but there are provisions for an eight-hour day in government establishments of one kind and another. But I shall be able to report on that more definitely later. It is of course in the United States that most of this legislation has taken place. While there has been a certain amount of legislation in Australia and New Zealand which I shall place before you definitely, if desired, it is of minor importance because the attitude of the government has been rather dwarfed by the fact that the eight-hour day is so generally observed in private establishments.

Mr. MACDONELL.—Are you speaking of Australasia?

Prof. SKELTON.—Yes. It is, I suppose, to the experience of the United States that we will turn chiefly for information, both because of the close parallel between industrial and labour conditions there and here, and because it is in the United States, that most of the legislation of this character has been passed. I have examined into what has been done both by the federal and by the various state governments, and have tried to compile all the legislation in the two jurisdictions, and am endeavouring also to get some light on the experience of the actual working of the legislation so far as it can be determined. I am prepared to outline briefly, if the Committee so desires, the legislation at present existing both in the federal government and in the various state governments. I thought that possibly might do for a start.

The CHAIRMAN.—Before proceeding, Mr. Skelton, I wish you would inform the Committee of the conversation you had with Dr. Flint and myself when the arrangement was made as to the scope of your inquiry.

Prof. SKELTON.—As I gathered from a letter that was sent me by Dr. Flint, as well as by conversation, it would chiefly bear on the experience of other countries along this line.