

# Editorial Page of The Canadian Labor Press

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## Abuse of the Workmen's Compensation Act

There never was a more favorable piece of legislation enacted for the benefit of Labor than the Workmen's Compensation Act, and, like all good things for the benefit of mankind, it can and is being abused. The only person who wants to take advantage of this "friend of the masses" is the lazy individual who has neither the interest of his country, his work or his fellow employee at heart. It is very easy to "kill a good thing" and the very men who are helping to kill the Workmen's Compensation Act are the very ones who may need a helping hand the most sometime in the future.

Apart from the actual monetary consideration, the real harm is done by men needlessly neglecting their work for days in order that they may reap the benefit of the Act and, in the meantime, everything may be thrown into confusion by the man's absence from his work. A man who will resort to such trickery cannot be depended upon and when promotions and raises in pay are the order, he wonders why he was neglected.

## Why Workers Leave Canada

The following table shows very graphically the reason why the Canadian Textile Workers are migrating to the United States.

During the first ten months of 1923 Great Britain exported to Canada under the special low duties granted to Great Britain a greater yardage of woollen and worsteds than Great Britain exported to any other country, according to the figures compiled from the Bradford Chamber of Commerce Journal.

In the following list is given the square yards exported by Great Britain to each country, the population of the country, and the amount per head of population.

Woolens and worsteds exported by Great Britain in the first ten months of 1923:

	sq. yards	Population sq. yds per head
Canada	24,147,800	8,500,000 2.84
China	16,556,200	441,000,000 .03
Japan	23,832,300	57,000,000 .41
Australia	15,259,900	5,500,000 2.68
Argentine Republic	12,856,800	8,700,000 1.47
Belgium	4,692,100	7,685,000 .58
British East Indies	4,097,800	2,140,000 1.91
New Zealand	4,002,500	1,220,000 3.28

No other country taking 4,000,000 yards.

From the above figures it will be seen that Great Britain exports to Canada the greatest actual yardage and more yardage per head of population to any other country but New Zealand.

The efficiency of the tariff in the United States can be seen as Great Britain exports to the United States only .12 of a square yard per head, the lowest amount outside of China.

When it is considered that the amount of yardage exported by Great Britain into Canada would keep 20,000 workers employed on full time throughout the year if the work were done here, it will be seen why employees are enquiring about positions in the United States.

## FACTORY ACT FOR THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO—HOW IT IS ENACTED

Compared with most of the European countries and even with some of the United States of America, Ontario is a recent entrant into the industrial world and comparatively few of our industries have a history which can be traced back for more than one generation. We are, therefore, free countries and, like other infants born in these highly civilized times, have many advantages over those whose beginnings were hampered by difficulties which to us might appear overwhelming. In this province we have started our industrial development equipped with modern education, modern knowledge and comparatively modern buildings, while, in older countries, pioneers in new industries have had to contend with an inherent distrust of innovations (the introduction of machinery into spinning mills caused riots in the spinning centres of England), ignorance and lack of education on the part of the workers, buildings with poor light, worse ventilation and primitive sanitary arrangements. The evolution of the modern factory from these early buildings is an interesting study in itself, while the gradual improvement of the general hygienic conditions under which the factory worker labors, forms one of the brightest illustrations of modern progress.

**Better Conditions**

In these older countries, when the public mind became aroused as to the very unsatisfactory conditions under which many industries had been carried on, legislation was initiated to prevent some of the most glaring of the evils, and, after this, a steady stream of legislation has been enacted, always tending towards improvement in the buildings, sanitation, hours of labor, protection of machinery and other matters affecting the health and safety of the factory workers.

As industry commenced to develop in this Dominion and a steady increasing proportion of the population became engaged in manufacturing, it became apparent that if the objectionable working conditions which

had taken so long to eradicate in older countries were not to be repeated in this Dominion, some form of legislative protection to the workers would be necessary, and, as the necessity has arisen, various provinces enacted protective laws, based upon the experience of the older countries.

**First Act in 1884**

In Ontario the first Factory act was passed in 1884 and, although much changed by subsequent additions and amendments, forms the basis of the present Factory, Shop and Office Building act. The original act was intended for the protection of factory workers, but its scope has since been enlarged to include all workers in practically all industrial buildings.

**Permanent Inspector**

For the purposes of inspection the province is divided into 10 districts, each in charge of an inspector, the inspectors in charge of the more remote districts residing at Hamilton, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie and Stratford, respectively, and the others in Toronto. Each of these inspectors is continuously engaged in visiting the industrial plants in his district with the object of seeing that the provisions of the Factory, Shop and Office Building act are being complied with. He looks especially for sources of danger to life, limb or health of employees; takes care that all machinery, shafting, belting, etc., is efficiently guarded wherever practicable; examines elevators; notes whether the exits to buildings are sufficient and of such a character as to allow of the ready escape of employees in case of fire; inspects the sanitary accommodation to see whether it is suitable, sufficient and properly kept; observes whether the buildings are properly lighted, ventilated and heated; ascertains whether the boilers and other vessels under pressure have been properly inspected; reports violations of the Minimum Wage act and generally inspects every detail of the plant with eyes trained and experienced to detect anything likely to prove inimical to the health or safety of the employees. He must also see that no

child under 14 years of age is employed and none under 16 without the employment certificate required under the Adolescent School Attendance act.

At the end of his inspection the inspector leaves with the employer or with the owner of the building, as the case may be, an order specifying any matter which requires amendment. A copy of this order is transmitted to the head office, from which a confirmatory letter is sent and is followed up until the trouble is remedied.

**Seeks Co-operation**

During the whole of his work, the inspector must use great tact and discretion, as he knows that far more satisfactory results are obtained by friendly treatment than by arousing antagonism. He prefers to be looked upon as a friend of both employer and employee and not as an official whose main object is to cause trouble. He is frequently able to show the employer that a small present expense from many handicaps incident to older financial gain. Generally the employer will result in an ultimate or recognizes that expenditure on improvements tending towards increased safety and comfort of his employees is money well spent.

The work of the inspectresses is more particularly devoted to plants where female help is employed, and has been of much service in securing remedies to conditions which it might have been difficult for male inspectors to deal with. One inspectress resides in St. Thomas, one in Kingston and the others in Toronto.

**Work Defined**

Many industries have their own particular risks to employees, and the problems involved in the minimizing of these risks can be solved best by those having intimate knowledge of the industry in question. For this purpose, one inspector has been appointed whose work is confined to the grinding and polishing trades. Fumes, gases and harmful dusts given off in certain industrial processes create a serious health hazard in some factories, and in others chemicals are used which have injurious effects upon those using them. Expert chemical knowledge and experience are necessary in diagnosing and eliminating these hazards. A fully qualified industrial chemist, with a properly equipped laboratory, is attached to the staff for dealing with these problems.

The act provides that plans of new buildings and of alterations to existing buildings must be submitted for approval and a qualified architect attached to the staff examines the submitted plans to ensure that they comply with the provisions of the act.

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## To Declare for an Eight-Hour Day

London, Eng.—Minister of Labor Shaw informed the House of Commons that the President of the Board of Trade would speedily introduce a bill in Parliament designed to give effect to the Washington convention for the eight-hour day. The minister added that provided the bill was enacted without amendments contrary to the provisions of the conventions respecting hours of labor and other matters it was proposed to ratify the convention.

Mr. Shaw foreshadowed the proposed ratification of the Washington convention when he told a deputation from the trade union congress that the MacDonald ministry would favorably consider the matter at an early date. The deputation said 12,000,000 workers in Great Britain would benefit by ratification of the convention and that there was much disappointment among them that no steps had been taken in this direction.

The deputation informed Mr. Shaw that no ratification by Great Britain had encouraged a tendency in other countries to extend hours of labor and that nothing could protect British industry from unfair foreign competition so effectively as putting the Washington convention into operation.

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