

351.83.82

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### STANDING COMMITTEE B

### OFFICIAL REPORT

### FACTORIES BILL

TUESDAY, 20th APRIL, 1937

Twelfth Day's Proceedings

#### Contents

Amendments dealing with the hours of employment of women and young persons were considered on Clause 68.

The Committee adjourned until Thursday, 22nd April, at 11 a.m.

328.  
420  
2  
GRE

LONDON

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE  
To be purchased in the manner indicated on the back of this wrapper

Price Sixpence net

Pamphlet

328-4202 ARE

3800167365  
38 73 5

489

Factories Bill

20 APRIL 1937 Standing Committee B 490

## FACTORIES BILL.

STANDING COMMITTEE B.

### OFFICIAL REPORT.

Tuesday, 20th April, 1937.

[Major LLOYD GEORGE in the Chair.]

CLAUSE 68.—(*General conditions as to hours and employment of women and young persons.*)

*The following Amendments stood upon the Order Paper:*

In page 56, line 26, after "shall," to insert "in the case of a woman."

In line 27, to leave out "forty-eight," and to insert "forty."

In line 27, after "forty-eight," to insert:

"or in the case of young persons forty."

In line 28, at the end, to insert:

"and in the case of a young person neither exceed seven in any day nor exceed forty in any week."

**The Chairman:** The Amendment which I propose to call first is the first one, that in the name of the hon. Member for Doncaster (Mr. Short), and I suggest that the following three Amendments can be discussed together with it. If necessary and if the Committee wishes, they can be divided upon separately.

**Mr. Denman:** On a point of Order. May I suggest that that procedure puts us in a rather difficult position? Whereas as the first, third, and fourth Amendments relate solely to the hours of young persons, the second relates to the hours of women. A debate which includes both those questions must necessarily be somewhat confused. Part of my case will be that the hours appropriate to adult women will be totally inappropriate to young persons. I suggest that it would really be better to separate the Debates and not to take them as one.

**The Chairman:** I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has any cause to worry about the discussion. His point will be made quite well under the proposed procedure. He will observe that the fourth

Amendment is consequential upon the one that I am calling. The hon. Gentleman's case is that in regard to 40 hours for young persons. The first Amendment is bound to lead to a Division on the question of women and young persons, and there need not be any confusion. That is why I suggested that it was better to divide separately. The discussion will be far better taken as a whole.

11.5 a.m.

**Mr. Short:** I beg to move, in page 56, line 26, after "shall," to insert "in the case of a woman."

It is clear from your Ruling, Major Lloyd George, that this Amendment, in conjunction with the others, would, in the case of women as well as of young persons, reduce the hours of labour to 40. I trust that the Home Secretary, or whoever is to reply, will not seek to ride off on the point that 48 hours may be all right for women and, by basing his argument upon that point, defeat the proposal to reduce the hours of labour to 40 for young persons. Up to now, the Committee, in the consideration of this Clause, has, acting on the advice of the Home Secretary, taken a most reactionary course. Hon. Members have not accepted any of our Amendments which were calculated to improve the position of employés who will come under the Clause. We have been engaged in what I might term bloodless surgery, so far as the right hon. Gentleman and his colleague are concerned. I hope, if they have any blood at all, that it will be running more freely and warmly to-day, and that they will seek to meet us on this very important question of the reduction of hours.

In the Second Reading Debate, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland referred to a speech made by Lord Shaftesbury, when he was speaking on a Factory Bill in those days, and when he said something about lighting a candle. We have lit a candle, so far as safety provisions and improvements in machinery are concerned. We have done away with nuts standing prominently out of machinery; we have decided that they shall be countersunk in new machinery in future, but when it comes to the human bolts, we seem to find a complete lack of consideration and sympathy on the part of the Home Office. In a speech the other

[Mr. Short.] day, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department referred to an agreement: I have read his words, and I admit that they do not go so far as was thought by my hon. Friend the Member for Gorbals (Mr. Buchanan). Nevertheless, I would make it clear that there is no agreement, as far as I understand, with the Trades Union Congress. There has been consultation. I should like to know whether the Home Secretary and the Home Office are in the pocket of the employers, as to the provisions of the Bill. That point ought to be cleared up. We are here, happily, as freely elected persons, capable and responsible to our constituents. My colleagues and I are not dictated to by anybody from outside, whether the Trades Union Congress or anybody else.

As to whether 48 hours is too long a time for women to work, I would point out that women are prone to accidents to a greater degree than men. A large proportion of the accidents in factories have been to women, and now that we are taking workshops into the Bill I have no doubt that there will be an increase in accidents, despite the provisions to which we have already agreed. I would call attention to what was said by the Home Secretary and the hon. Member for West Swansea (Mr. Lewis Jones) about accidents to women and young persons. The hon. Member for Dundee (Miss Horsbrugh) called attention in a previous Debate to accidents among women and asked whether they were not more prone to them. She drew forth a very important statement from the Home Secretary and from the hon. Member for West Swansea. The hon. Member gave these figures: In 1928 the accident rate for boys was 22 per cent. higher than for men; in 1934 it was 38·5 per cent. higher. In 1929, the accident rate for girls was 55·5 per cent. higher than for men, while in 1934 it was 65·5 per cent. higher than for men. The Home Secretary, intervening later in the Debate, pointed out that the official figures for the cotton industry had been separated. He said that if you took the cleaning accidents for men, per 100,000, they represented a proportion of 45·6; for women, the proportion was 101·7. The cleaning accidents to young persons he gave as 166·8 per 100,000.

I said in the Second Reading Debate that I had been reading the literature

issued by the International Labour Office in connection with the conditions of employment of young persons in Persia, and it was reported that many of them fell asleep and had to be wakened by the ringing of bells and the making of noises. I have no doubt that children work 48 hours per week go to sleep to some extent, and it is important that we should reduce their hours to 40. What applies to young persons applies also to women. I would remind the Committee of a speech made by the Prime Minister when he was the guest of the Federation of British Industries. He commented upon the increasing speed of the age and called attention to the great strain placed upon adults as well as upon women and young persons, and he gave a gentle but unmistakable hint to the employers of the need for careful examination of the question of a reduction of hours of labour. It would be a good thing if we began here by setting an example in the case of women and young people. It would be a magnificent gesture. I never did like that word, but it seems to have crept into the phraseology of politicians and writers, and I wish I could discover a better word. Nevertheless it would be a nice gesture.

The hon. Member for East Birkenhead (Mr. Graham White) said the other day that it would be a grand thing if the Bill could be made worthy of the occasion and if we could import something into it which would make people speak of it not as the Factories Act of 1937, but as an outstanding legislative achievement of the Parliament of which we are happy to be Members. The Home Secretary and the Under-Secretary are here provided with a great opportunity. Now is their time and chance. They should accept this Amendment and reduce the hours of labour to 40. Let it be remembered that the 40 hours a week, or the 48 hours a week, in the Bill, have to be considered in conjunction with hours of overtime up to 100 or 150 per annum, except in the case of young persons under the age of 16, who, if the Bill passes in its present form, will not be permitted to work overtime. This means that they can work as much as 54 hours a week. I hope on this occasion the Committee will make a great effort to ensure a reduction of hours of work for women and young persons. In the Second Reading Debate, I said that I welcomed the prohibition contained in the Bill, for I do not share the opinion of certain

women's organizations that there should be no restriction upon the economic employment of women. If there were no economic pressure driving women or young persons into workshops, and if there were complete freedom, it might be right, but under our present economic system women are driven to enter industry which they would avoid if they were free—

**Viscountess Astor:** Under Communism women are working in the mines.

**Mr. Short:** I do not intend to be drawn into a dissertation on Communism. I do not suppose the Noble Lady understands the principles of Communism, let alone the principles of Socialism. There is nothing wrong with the principles of Socialism or with the real principles of Communism; generally, what is wrong is the people who put them into operation. The Noble Lady no doubt has in mind Russia, where there is a dictatorship which is foreign to my desires, and certainly I have nothing in common with it.

**Viscountess Astor:** The hon. Member talks about it enough.

**Mr. Short:** Do not let us stray from the important question of hours. Communism is a very interesting topic, and if the Noble Lady will come and have a cup of tea with me, I will discuss Communism with her, I hope to her advantage. To continue my arguments, in a number of countries the 40-hour week has been adopted for all adults. That is notably the case in France, and I think my hon. Friend gave some evidence concerning the United States of America. On the question of hours of work, this country is lagging behind. Our employers are not likely of their own accord, even in agreement with the trade unions—and I would remind the Committee that there are roughly only 4,000,000 people organized on a trade-union basis—to implement the 40-hour week. Indeed, the attitude of the employers and the Government at the Washington Conference is one of opposition, and, as far as textile workers are concerned, the employers' spokesmen are opposed to the question being even taken to Geneva.

On the question of hours, the employers of this country have been most reactionary and retrograde, and it is for Parliament by legislation to force them to introduce a 40-hour week. Although we

have already decided that this shall not apply to adult labour, we should make a unique beginning by providing for the employment for not more than 40 hours a week of women and young persons. In the newspapers this morning I read that in London alone there are 5,364 boys under 16 working 72 hours a week. That information arises out of the Departmental Committee on Boy Labour. I know that the Home Secretary has promised to consider this some time during the discussion of the Factories Bill, and he may seek to do something—

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sir John Simon):** We mean to do something.

**Mr. Short:** That is very gratifying. As I understand, the boys referred to are not factory boys—

**Sir J. Simon:** Some are and some are not.

**Mr. Short:** In any case, the statement that I have quoted indicates the terrible conditions in which child labour is still employed in this country. Other countries have made a move in this matter, and it is time we did. There are other aspects of this subject. The Government have introduced a Bill which makes an appeal to young persons to engage in physical recreation, to build up strong bodies and active minds. If these children from 14 onwards are to work 48 hours a week, and children over 16, 48 hours a week, plus overtime, what opportunities will they have for recreation? Moreover, we want these young people to use more of their leisure time for the purpose of cultivating the mind as well as the body. We want them to go to night schools. I know that some very good employers allow their young workers to leave their work for so many hours and to receive tuition during working hours. That is very creditable of those employers, but we must not deceive ourselves into believing that it is more than a minority which do it.

On the grounds which I have stated, I submit to the Committee that we ought to take a big step forward. I hope the Home Secretary will meet us on these matters. I hope he will not base his case upon 48 hours a week being all right for women and consequently being good enough for young persons. As the hon. Member for Central Leeds (Mr. Denman)

[**Mr. Short.**] pointed out, this is a question that may be reasonably divided into two parts, the interests of women and the interests of young persons. When the time comes we shall take a clear division on the Amendments, unless the Home Secretary meets us. I hope that, for the reasons which I have put forward, and for many others which no doubt my hon. Friends will state, very sympathetic and practical consideration will be given to the Amendments.

**Mr. Graham White:** I wish to associate myself with the arguments of the hon. Member for Doncaster (Mr. Short). The length of my remarks will not be the measure of their sincerity or my conviction of the necessity for some modification being made in the Bill. The hon. Member for Doncaster said that it would be nice to make a gesture, but I think that something more than a gesture is needed here. We are all anxious that our country should be in the van, as it has been on many occasions in legislation of this kind. It is absolutely necessary for the well-being of our country that we should not allow the Bill to go forward as it now is. It must be remembered that the age structure of the population of this country is changing, and that there is ahead of us an increasing responsibility for old age. Therefore, it is all the more necessary that the young people of this country should be fit, both mentally and physically.

The hours permitted under the Bill do not allow that degree of fitness to which the individual is entitled and which the nation requires. The matter has been well stated in a memorandum issued by the Association of Municipal Corporations. In language which is better and more concise than any which I could command, they state the reasons the hours of work proposed in this Bill are too long to give young people adequate opportunities for the kind of life, mental and physical, to which they are entitled. I have had considerable opportunities of studying the life of young people of the ages dealt with in these Clauses. If these were to be the last words I said in this Committee or in the House of Commons, I should be glad to feel that, however ineffective they might have been, they had advocated better conditions for

the young people of this country and a modification of the hours set forth in this Bill.

**Mr. McCorquodale:** I rather regret the fact that we are discussing so many Amendments together. I am particularly interested in young persons, but I think that, having decided to reject the 40-hour week for men, we must of necessity reject it for adult women. Consequently, I do not wish to make any remarks in that respect. I would like only to say in passing that I think this country would be very well advised to hold its hand on the question of the 40-hour week until it has seen what will happen in France. According to my information, at the present time the net result of the 40-hour week being put into practice in France has been to increase prices all round by nearly 30 per cent., which means that the working men and women in France are now 30 per cent. worse off than they were before, since they get the same money wages. We do not want that here. One of the matters most consistently impressed upon all who have been interested in the question of the 40-hour week has been the necessity for seeing that wage rates and the price levels connected with them are at least maintained. The people of this country would be exceedingly annoyed if we limited their hours to 40 and they then found that the price level went up 30 per cent. and that they were to that extent worse off because of that.

The question with regard to young persons, especially those under 16, is entirely different. I would strongly urge the Government—and this is a non-party question—to meet us in this matter. For young persons, especially those under 16, the whole country would say that 48 hours is far too long a time. It would not leave them time to take advantage of any training or exercises under the Government's scheme for promoting physical fitness. We are suffering in this country from a shortage of skilled and a plethora of unskilled labour. A young unskilled worker only become skilled if he has time and is prepared to spend it in studying his job outside the hours of work. If a young person is engaged 48 hours a week in a factory, he cannot spend time outside studying his trade. I do not believe that young persons, especially those under 16, can work 48 hours a week and adequately

maintain the best of health. Between 14 and 16 years is the age when young people grow fastest. I grew nearly a foot between those years. During such a period of growing one cannot be as strong as later on. For those over 16 I would rather see the hours of overtime abolished, but for those under 16 I urge on the Government the desirability of reducing the hours of work to 40 a week or to some figure far below the hours at present stated in the Bill.

It has been put to me that there are certain trades in which a young person is put to work in a team and that if he were not in a team, he would lose opportunities of instruction and education in his own trade. But special cases always receive special treatment, and I urge on the Government that special cases of that kind can be treated by special regulations, which would not interfere with the principle which I am urging that young persons under 16 should have their working hours drastically reduced.

**Mr. Ellis Smith:** Like the hon. Member for Sowerby (Mr. McCorquodale), I am only concerned in this debate with young people. I hope the Home Secretary and the Under-Secretary for the Home Department will, while the debate is proceeding, consider whether we cannot differentiate between women and young persons in this matter. More and more women are claiming equality of opportunity, equal status and equal pay with men, but I hope that those of us who are prepared to support them in that are going to concentrate in this debate on the question affecting the young people. I am concerned about the young people who go into industry fresh from school, particularly those between the ages of 14 and 16. More and more in modern industry we find that young persons are being put to repetition work. Work is being speeded up in this way until the increase in production in Great Britain since 1929 is greater than in any other capitalist country in the world.

In big factories employing repetition methods, a new process is being carried out known as "micromotion," introduced from America. Persons are specially trained to watch people at work in the factories. Films are taken of the people at work and afterwards discussed by managers and assistants in order to decide what unnecessary use of human energy

there has been and what unnecessary operations can be cut out. Afterwards the persons specially trained to apply micromotion methods to production go into the factories, watch the young people at work, and point out to them how they can cut out any particular movement in order to increase production and their own earnings. That is a good thing. It is important in these times to increase production and obtain the maximum output in the least number of hours possible. Labour-saving appliances and methods are looked upon as a blessing in the home. The same thing ought to apply in the workshop. But instead of being looked upon as a blessing at the present time, methods of increased production are regarded as a menace by the workpeople because they are not getting the benefits from this increased production which they should. So far as young girl workers are concerned, however, we have an opportunity in this Committee of joining together to see that, if industry itself is not prepared, then Parliament will be moved to see to it that young people do get some benefit in the way of reduced hours. The "Times" on 9th December, 1935, reported:

"The United Steel Companies (of Sheffield) have introduced a novel scheme to increase output and to relieve the monotony of the typists' work. On each typist's machine a 'tapometer' has been fitted which records the number of taps made by each typist each day. If the number of taps reaches a certain standard by the end of the week the girl receives a bonus of five shillings. The scheme has increased the output of typists by seventy per cent. A similar scheme has also been applied to operators on calculating machines, and some girls are making more than 200 additions a minute."

Sir Joseph Burn, general manager of the Prudential Assurance Company, has also made the following statement:

"A few clerks, controlling a battery consisting of tabulator machines, together with punching and sorting machines, can produce records and accounts at the same speed as a department of 70 to 80 clerks."

Those are two typical illustrations of what I have been saying. The result of these methods is that, although young people may go home tired at night, oftener than not they get half-an-hour or more of sleep in order to recuperate. In these days, when we are trying to encourage the provision of educational facilities for young people to equip themselves technically to play their part in modern industry, it is not right that they should

[Mr. Smith.]  
be kept at work for 48 hours a week. They should get some benefit from all this repetition work by being given sufficient time to attend evening classes. The longer distances which people have to travel to work from their homes in new housing estates also strengthens the claim for the reform for which we are asking. It is true that the Government representatives at Geneva have taken a stand against the adoption of a 40-hours week generally, but it is not true that the reduction of hours from 48 to 40 in France has brought about France's financial difficulties.

**Mr. McCerquodale:** I did not say that. I said that the reduction of hours to 40 had brought about an increase in prices in France by 30 per cent. That is so in the case of a small factory, of which I have special knowledge, in France.

**Mr. Ellis Smith:** I want to avoid controversy, especially on this issue. Therefore, I shall not proceed to deal with that aspect of the matter. I should welcome an opportunity of dealing with it outside, but I wish the Debate to be kept to as narrow limits as possible so that we should give hon. Members opposite no excuse for not joining with us in the suggested reform.

**Mr. Denman:** May I call attention to the precise Amendments that we are discussing? Nos. 1 and 4, in the name of the hon. Member for Doncaster (Mr. Short) go together. I shall not be able to support Amendment No. 1 in that particular form, because the hon. Member's second Amendment runs:

"and in the case of a young person (these hours shall) neither exceed seven in any day, nor exceed forty in any week."

That is identical with the Amendment down in the names of other hon. Members and myself, except for the seven hours in any given day. I do not know whether the hon. Member has considered the problem of the five-day week. It cuts across the practice of certain first-class employers in allowing young persons two off-days off in the week. You could not in those circumstances confine the hours to seven a day.

**Mr. Short:** They were going to confine them to nine in the Bill.

**Mr. Denman:** Perhaps even less, but I do not think that seven is a practical

figure. I am sorry to differ on such a point, but what I want to argue is simply that a 40-hours maximum week for young persons is long enough. We decided at our last meeting, with, I think, the general approval of this side of the Committee, that it is the business of the Government to maintain a reasonably even keel in their policy. Last year we passed an Education Act, and we decided that it was in harmony with the intentions of Parliament that children should be allowed to leave school for beneficial employment at the age of 15. In pursuance of that policy we ought to agree to limit the hours of young persons to 40. Beneficial employment was to have regard to hours of work in the first place, in the second place to opportunities for further education, and in the third place to time for recreation. We were told, in the course of the passage of that Bill, that it was not appropriate in that Bill to limit hours but that the opportunity would arise on industrial legislation, more especially on the Factory Bill. Both Houses of Parliament were given a definite assurance that this would be the right place to fulfil the terms of the Education Act. Does anybody believe that those three requirements can be satisfied within the compass of a 48-hour week?

On the Second Reading I asked the Government to make plain the sort of hours that they thought a 48-hour week would involve, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland kindly gave me a schedule. I ask the Committee to consider the actual hours during which these young persons are, in the view of the Government, likely to be occupied. He took the case of employés who began work at 7.30 in the morning and went on till 12 on every weekday, including Saturdays. As regards afternoons, on two days of the week it was from 1 o'clock to 5.30 and on three days from 1 o'clock to 5 p.m. As the hon. Member for Stoke (Mr. Ellis Smith) has just pointed out, work beginning at 7.30 means that they have to get up pretty early. As we demolish our slums and house our people in parts remote from their work, it is putting it moderately to say that to start work at 7.30 a young person has to get up at 6.30, and does anybody believe that after that day's work the evening can be profitably used in the way that the Government desire?

Since the Education Act the Government have launched a great programme of physical development, and I assert that the 40-hour week is the maximum which is consistent with the declared policy of the Government in that design. One could quote a great deal of authority for this. The hon. Member opposite has just quoted the Association of Municipal Corporations. May I quote a letter that I have received from the secretary of that body? It is dated 15th April, and it begins:

"The Education Committee of my Association have given consideration to the provisions of this Bill so far as they relate to the employment of children. They have also had the advantage of perusing a memorandum which has been prepared by the Committee on Wage Earning Children in relation to this Bill."

The letter concludes:

"I am accordingly instructed to inform you that the Amendments which carry out those recommendations (that is, in favour of the 40-hour week) have the support of the Education Committee of my Association."

I was going to quote a very admirable remark of the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Wakefield) on the Second Reading. He is one of our authorities on physical education. But I am glad that he is here and will be able to deal with the matter himself. There is another authority which I would quote. That is the report of the recent Departmental Committee on the Hours of Employment of Young Persons in Certain Unregulated Occupations. They say:

"We are therefore of opinion that for young persons as a whole, a week consisting of as much as 48 working hours is definitely too long to afford the necessary opportunities for continued education and recreation."

I think I am not putting it too high in saying it is the unanimous view of all bodies associated with the welfare of children that 40 hours a week is a proper maximum.

Let me turn to another side, the side of the industrialists. None of us wants legislation which would seriously embarrass, if not endanger, industry. That would be killing the goose which lays the golden eggs, but I would never agree that we should kill our greatest asset, the youth of the nation, to provide cheap labour. Industrially, the case is very strong for a 40-hour week. One can recall the case of a petition which was presented to this House by John Fielden declaring that it was absolutely essential

for the maintenance of the cotton trade of Manchester that children of eight should be allowed to work 12 hours a day. We no longer hold opinions of that kind, but it is typical of the natural anxiety that industry always feels when it is threatened with some restriction and the need for some reorganisation. I can remember in our time, when we tried to prevent newspaper boys running about between horses' feet in the streets of our towns, delivering their papers, that we were told that if we took them off the streets, we should be depriving citizens of their news. We all know that those children have completely disappeared and that we get all the news we want, if not more news than we want. The same argument was used about half-time. I remember even more vividly in 1914 a deputation from glassworkers declaring that their industry was dependent on the night work of boys of 14 and that if we abolished that night work, they would be unable to compete with foreign industry.

Here let me make one extremely strong point about the opportunity presented to us at the moment for making this alteration. In those days we were under a Free Trade system. It was a very powerful argument that if we added to the costs, we should be lessening the competitive power of our industry. It was one of the chief arguments of my Conservative friends in favour of tariff reform that we would then be able to fortify our industry against foreign competition. This is the golden moment for making the change. We are beginning the tariff régime. Industry has not settled down into any watertight system, and such changes could be more easily made now than 10 years hence and much more easily than 20 years ago. There is one further quite cast-iron argument, which is that industry in effect acquiesced in the 40-hour week nearly 20 years ago.

I am afraid that there is no other Member in this Committee who was intimately associated with the Fisher Act of 1918, although, of course, the Home Secretary remembers it well. By that Act there was set up a system of day continuation schools which in effect meant a 40-hour working week, and that was acquiesced in by industry at the time. They saw its difficulties. In 1917 there were negotiations with different industries to see if they would be able to adapt

[Mr. Denman.]

themselves. I remember especially the most interesting case of the cotton trade. Lancashire actually offered half time from 14 to 16 rather than the terms of the Fisher Bill. Ultimately that half-time proposition was rejected, and the cotton industry accepted the modified proposal which was embodied in the Act of 1918. So the Committee will see that industry did contemplate and either acquiesced in or actively accepted the proposition that they could work the 40-hour week. I may be told that that Act was never brought into operation. That is true. It failed, not for industrial reasons, but because it was brought into operation partially, and the friction that resulted made this withdrawal necessary, also because the Geddes "axe" made it necessary for the Government to economise even in a matter of that sort. What really killed it was that the areas outside London where it did not apply were able to pour their children over into London to the injury of the London children and the indignation of the parents in that area. But it has survived at one place. That is at Rugby. It applies there to all employers; it has gone on since 1920 working well and is a settled part of their industrial life. So I say that industry is capable of adjusting itself to the needs of such a new system. We, the National Labour group, cannot acquiesce in the continuance of 48 hours. I have consulted colleagues, and they agree with me that to refuse a 40-hour week would cause serious disappointment among large masses of people.

**Sir John Haslam:** For young persons?

**Mr. Denman:** Yes. The refusal of a 40-hour week would mean severe disappointment and would inevitably cause a drift away from the support of the National Government. The National Government cannot afford to mistake public opinion in this matter. May I conclude with a quotation from a Conservative authority whose wisdom I think the whole Committee will acknowledge. It is from a speech in favour of putting forward a plea for boldness:

"If the Government followed the example of the electorate, they would err, if they must, on the side of vigour rather than of caution . . . The nation will warm to the support of the Government if it sees the marks of drive and determination."

**Mr. Ellis Smith:** Who said it?

**Mr. Denman:** We cannot afford to go on with policies that were already out-of-date before the end of the War. The author of that statement, who will no doubt recognise it, is the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office. He spoke, as he was entitled to do, for the young Conservatives, the vigorous young Conservative social reformers, a type of which the party has always been reasonably proud and which makes our association so pleasant and so happy.

**Viscountess Astor:** We are deeply grateful to the hon. Gentleman who has just spoken for what he has said. He has made it almost impossible for the Government to reject a 40-hour week for children. I was interested when he talked about the Fisher Act. It is only fair to the House of Commons to remind the Committee that that Act was brought in, talked over, and accepted, and that it was killed, not by the Geddes Committee, but by a body of men whom the Opposition described as a set of hard-faced business men who had done well out of the War. I thank Heaven that we have not a set of those men in the House of Commons now. I had to sit and watch the Measure killed; it was the stupidest and blindest thing that a country has ever done. Mercifully, none of those men are left. It was quite true; they were men who had done well out of the War.

**Mr. Broad:** They are in the House of Lords now.

**Viscountess Astor:** A good many of them. It was heart-breaking to men like the late Lord Henry Bentinck, and people who had fought all their lives for education and for better conditions, to see that remarkable measure killed. If it had been put into operation, it would have saved us much juvenile unemployment, and our Education Act would have been working full time. It was a magnificent thing. Now that is past, and we have a progressive and enlightened House of Commons. The hon. Gentleman made a reference to the Rugby experiment. If any employers think that a 40-hour week is not possible, with continued education, I would ask them to go to Rugby and see what is being done there. It is one of the most interesting experiments.

I do not want to go as far as the hon. Member did who moved the Amendment,

but I believe that as long as you have a 48-hour week for men you are bound to have it for women; otherwise, you throw women out of industry. People do not realise that four out of every five women in the country are in industry at 18 years of age. We cannot possibly vote for the proposal without doing a great injustice to women. We all feel very strongly about children and young persons. I was talking to a big employer recently, and he was saying that the country is faced with a problem in this question of taking children into industry at 14 years of age and turning them out at 18. I am surprised that the Home Secretary has not come to the House of Commons and said that he would do something. I suppose it is the Cabinet. We do not know who it is, but the Home Secretary ought to come to this Committee and say, "We have a terrific problem, and that is the question of children between the ages of 14 and 18."

**Sir J. Simon:** I have not spoken yet.

**Viscountess Astor:** If I were the Home Secretary, I would call the Prime Minister's bluff. I would say to the Prime Minister, "What do you mean when you make a speech such as this?"

"Effects of speed not yet fully known, but the very prevalence of nervous breakdown to-day is a warning . . . Nervous strain in looking after great machine tools, working to minutest fractions of an inch . . . The creative act of construction which is satisfying to the whole man has given place to deadening repetition, deadening but still straining . . . Industrial leaders must study this problem of relieving strain by shorter hours . . . Essential to find adjustments to ensure sane and healthy life in mind as well as body."

When the Prime Minister has made a speech like that before the Federation of British Industries, the Home Secretary has a perfect right to say to him, "I am going to see that it is stopped now. I am not going to allow juveniles to work more than 40 hours a week." We shall look as foolish as the Labour party if we do not look out.

**Sir J. Haslam:** Impossible.

**Viscountess Astor:** Is it not impossible. The Labour party have been saying that they are doing away with the means test, and yet the London County Council are having a means test for children when they want to get maintenance grants to stay on at school. We shall

look just as foolish as they do unless we take this opportunity to say that juveniles shall not work in industry for more than 40 hours a week. I am not going to dwell on that point, because such good speeches have been made. Let hon. Members ask the Young Men's Christian Association or the Young Women's Christian Association, or anybody else who knows. They will tell you that girls and boys who come in after working 48 hours a week literally do not want any physical or mental exercise. The blindest and maddest thing that a country could ever do is to put pressure on children between 14 and 18 years of age. It is so stupid, so heartless, and so foolish. We all believe that we are coming to a 40-hour week. We are bound to get it, but until we get it let this Committee make it possible by voting for a 40-hour week for juveniles, and they will get it. I am not appealing to the bright young men, but to the wise old men. I beg them to do it.

One last thing. Every speaker in the country talks about education for leisure. That is going to be another terrific problem. What are people to do with their leisure in the next 20 years? We can see that, in a certain way, organised religion is losing its hold. I do not mean real religion. There is a massed effort, through "movies" and other things, to pull down the standards for which this nation has fought for generations. Our one chance is to get hold of the young people and to see that they get a proper education and a proper sense of what to do with their lives. If we overtire them between 14 and 18 years of age —well, we know that when people are tired, they lose control. They lose moral control. When they are older, they drink, but when they are younger, they are apt to do other things which they regret afterwards. It seems so obvious and so patent to every student of youth, and to everybody who has an interest in the progress of the country, that we should be blind and stupid, at a time when we are appealing throughout the country, in this Coronation year, for playing fields, and for giving the world a spiritual lead, if we did not try to give the Government a lead by voting *en masse* for a 40-hour week for children.

**Wing-Commander Wright:** I found myself intensely interested in what was said by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent (Mr. Ellis Smith). As an employer with a factory in which a good deal of repetition work is done, I was in entire agreement with almost everything he said. He completely hit the nail on the head when he said that the whole matter is one of production. There is no question that we can get the same sort of production in very much shorter hours, and if we see that our workpeople get a just reward for the extra effort they must make. The hon. Gentleman who moved the Amendment was rather hard on employers when he said that it was only through legislation that we could obtain shorter hours, whereas actually the hours of employment are well ahead of the legislation. A number of us believe that the 40-hour week is in sight. In my own factory we already work only 45 hours a week, and we find that our people are better, healthier, and happier, that they earn the same money, and that production has not decreased.

Nevertheless, I do not like to approach this matter entirely by legislation. I feel that it is better approached by educating public opinion, which is well on the way to being educated in that direction. I object to the restriction implied in saying to a man, "You shall not work more than so many hours a week." Had that restriction been in force always, a good many of us would not be as comfortably off as we are to-day. I know that there are many bad employers, but I believe that they are decreasing in number, who are inclined to work their people for an unreasonable number of hours. When hon. Members opposite show me a scheme which will kill that bad practice, and at the same time put no restriction on the free working man to work what hours he likes as long as he likes, I shall be the first to support it. A good many of us are free working men, but while I say "free," I recognise that we are all bound by the economic conditions in which we find ourselves.

The question of young people and of children up to the age of 16 years is an entirely different matter, upon which I feel very strongly. I should like to see the hours of young children up to 16 reduced so far as to make it uneconomical to employ them for production in a

factory, while making the hours sufficient for them to be employed for instruction. One of the great problems today, as we find it in Birmingham, is that we cannot get juveniles for instruction in a trade because they are lured away into industries which pay them wages higher than they would receive during their period of instruction. They are lured into those trades for the purpose of supplying cheap labour for production and repetition work, but when they arrive at a certain age they are thrown out onto the streets. They are quite useless, and they have a wrong mentality, because they have been used to getting a wage which is uneconomically high for them, instead of learning a trade. They are naturally disappointed, and that experience does not lead to the best type of citizen. We want to restrict the hours of these young people, but not so much that they will not be able to go into a factory to receive instruction.

There are many cases in my own works where certain jobs have been handed down for two or three generations from father to son or from uncle to nephew. As these young people have been instructed only and have not been used for production in early youth, I feel that they have been far better employed inside a factory getting instruction from their fathers or uncles, or from somebody else's fathers or uncles, than they would have been in going into some blind-alley job or into repetitive work in other factories. I appeal to the Home Secretary to consider amending this Bill in some way in order to try to achieve that object, at all events as far as children from the ages of 16 to 18 are concerned.

**Sir J. Simon:** I think that perhaps the Committee would like to hear some remarks from me, and therefore I ask leave to intervene now. If I deal with this matter rather deliberately and without hurrying too much, I am sure I shall be justified by the very great importance of the subject. I would like, in the first place, to say that during my experience of Committees, which is not anything like as great as that of some hon. Members here, I do not think I have ever heard any Debate in which every speaker has obviously tried to contribute of his best, without any party spirit, to the degree in which I have heard it to-day, and I am most grateful to all my colleagues,

on whatever side of the Committee they may sit, for the contributions which they have made.

Since I began to study this subject specially at the Home Office, I have been most deeply concerned about the particular matter which we are now engaged in discussing. I do not mean the 40-hour week, which I think has been treated by most speakers as really not a thing that we are going to include in this Bill, but the juvenile, especially the younger juvenile. I have for some time been making inquiries and looking at the matter from many points of view. The Committee will forgive me if, first of all, I remind it of some of the necessary circumstances to be borne in mind before we come to a conclusion about this subject, which is undoubtedly not only a very important, but also a rather complicated, subject.

Broadly speaking, there are at present about 3,000,000 men employed as workpeople in manufacturing industries; there are about 1,500,000 women over 18; and there are something like 1,000,000 young persons under 18, and of that number, over 500,000 are juveniles under 16. As every hon. Member knows very well, the circumstances in which this great army of people are working differ very widely. There are industries—my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton (Sir J. Haslam) knows this very well, as do others, particularly the hon. Member for Batley (Mr. Brooke)—in which there is a very close interdependence between the different classes of labour—what has been called "team work" by one or two people. I need not give illustrations, since they are known, but they are extremely important and cover, in the case of the textile industry, a very large part of the work. Anyone who has the responsibility for framing this legislation—and we all have that responsibility—must bear those things in mind. We have also to bear in mind that industry has, in fact, been organised on a basis which cannot in all cases be changed at a moment's notice. I do not say that it should not be changed. I do not say that Parliament should not give a lead to secure that change; but it would be quite wrong, because we take that view, to imagine that merely by a Section in an Act of Parliament passed during the next month or two we can ourselves, in fact, undertake to re-organise industry. It could not be done in that

way. Therefore, we must consider the "hows" and "whens" as well as the other and perhaps more fundamental things.

In addition to the considerations that I have already mentioned, it is also important to bear in mind another consideration, which I do not think I have heard mentioned, although the review made by my hon. Friend the Member for Central Leeds (Mr. Denman) contained very many interesting and important points. The supply of juvenile labour in this country will fall off in a very few years. That is a very big point. It is of no use our going on in the old ways and thinking that by being hard-faced, hard-hearted, or what some people call "practical," the old ways will continue. They will not. The number of juveniles in this country who will be available in the course of three or four years will drop substantially. Ever since I have understood that, I have thought that it is a very good reason for considering this subject of juveniles in a very forthcoming state of mind. We shall be forced to it in a few years, and it is much better to do things deliberately when we may than to find ourselves left with trouble which we have stored up. Those are considerations which have pressed upon all of us. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who was quoted to such effect just now, is very zealous on this subject, as I am.

Another thing that has to be borne in mind is that we must be fair to the present provisions of the Bill. It is a great mistake to regard the proposals of the Bill as though they did not represent a very great improvement in this respect. I do not say that we have not to improve them further, but we must try to look at the matter fairly. The Committee will see that, as far as the present law is concerned, from the point of view of permitted hours, juveniles between 14 and 16, juveniles between 16 and 18, and women of any age are all treated, as it were, on a level. While it is true that grown men have not got their hours of work limited by Statute, to a large extent one may say that the whole method has been one which keeps people going altogether while the factory is working. The hours that at present are permitted for women and young persons classed together are 55½ in textile factories and 60 hours in other factories. Those are very long hours indeed, and I am glad to think

[Sir J. Simon.] that in most cases they are never touched. But the result at present is that one gets an agreed working week—let us say 48 hours—and on top of that there is a very large quantity of overtime, which may extend over the whole year. In that respect women and young persons up to now have not been treated separately.

The first thing to notice about the present Bill—it is quite deliberately done and in itself is a great improvement—is that it contains a gradation as regards hours. The question for the Committee to decide is whether the gradation is steep enough. It is important to realise that there is a gradation. Under the Bill, as at present drawn, we have this position: Adult men, as before, are left to collective bargaining and so on. There is a statutory limit of 48 hours a week for women, with permissive overtime which is limited both in number of hours and in number of weeks. As regards young persons between 16 and 18, there are 48 hours a week, but there is a more limited provision concerning overtime, and as regards young persons between 14 and 16, there cannot be any overtime. Therefore, there is a gradation, and that is an entirely new and important principle. It is intended as a pointer to industry that it cannot go on for ever organising its system without any regard for the ages of the people employed. That is in itself an immense improvement.

Then comes the question, "Can we do better than we have done in this Bill as regards juveniles between 14 and 16?" For myself, I hope very much that we can, and I have taken that view for some time. We have to remember that in the Shops Act, which was passed by Parliament only two or three years ago—many of us now sitting here took part in the Debates—48 hours was the figure that was deliberately fixed for young people between 14 and 16 in shops. We have to remember that in what are called the unregulated trades, on which there has been a report recently, there is at present no limit on the hours of work of page boys in hotels, boys working lifts, and so on, but that the Committee, which was a most sympathetic and practical one, recommended 48 hours for juveniles between 14 and 16. Consequently, one must not treat the proposals of this Bill as though they represented some lagging

behind recent standards either adopted or recommended.

**Mr. Ellis Smith:** They work harder in factories.

**Sir J. Simon:** I am not differing from the hon. Gentleman, but only trying to put things in their right setting. I hope the Committee sees that I am not trying to start any controversial discussion, for we have to do this thing together, or we shall not do it at all. The view which I am very strongly disposed to take is that we ought to make an endeavour to go further. The problem of interdependence of work in a very large class of factories in this country—broadly speaking, in the cotton industry it is almost universal—is a very difficult problem to unravel. It is certain that if we said, by some sudden decision, that there was to be a very substantial difference in the number of hours worked by these youthful helpers and others, it would require a very serious overhauling and reorganisation in those industries. I do not say that it ought not to be called for, but I say that we cannot possibly impose it by Statute simply because we all feel that we would like to see this thing corrected here and now.

I have been in very close discussion with those who are able to help me in this matter. I have been able to get very great help from the Factories Department, and I have begun to make inquiries outside in various industries. I have not the least doubt that what I am saying now will bring upon me a flood of information from different parts of the country. I am glad of that, and I invite it. What I have in mind is this: Before this Bill leaves the House of Commons, as a result of our deliberate action, I would like to see it reduce the permitted hours of juveniles between 14 and 16. I believe that it will be found that the difficulty of doing that, and the actual need of doing it very possibly, varies in different industries. The hon. Member for Stoke (Mr. Ellis Smith) said that in these cases the work is very hard. I have made careful inquiries of the medical advisers to the Home Office, because I wanted to know whether they thought the existing 48 hours could be said to be injurious to health. The advice which I received from them was that on their present information that really cannot be said. Naturally, they would be very glad to see more time for leisure and recreation.

When we talk about 48 hours we have to remember that it is not a case of these young persons working that number of hours for a limited number of weeks in the year; it means week in and week out, with the exception of what are, as compared with those of some other people, very limited holidays. It means working at times when young people, like the rest of us, do not feel as fit as usual. We all know what that involves. That has to be thoroughly borne in mind, but my advisers, who are perfectly impartial, could not say that their experience has been that a 48-hours week for these juveniles proves injurious to health. I would put the case rather on the ground that we are reaching a time when, whether we consider educational policy, or physical recreation, or the future conditions in which young citizens are going to grow up, it is high time that we had a more limited number of working hours than 48 a week.

**Mr. Gibbins:** May I be allowed one question? Do the Minister's medical advisers, in suggesting that it is not injurious to work 48 hours a week between 14 and 16 years of age, have regard to any consequences later for young persons who work those hours?

**Sir Ernest Graham-Little:** Is the right hon. Member aware of the unanimous opinion expressed in the medical Press on this subject?

**Sir J. Simon:** I hope I have not started a controversy—I do not mind being interrupted; indeed, I am used to it—but I should like to make a continuous statement. I am not saying more than that I have inquired of my skilled advisers, and they say that they have no evidence which would justify them in declaring that it is injurious to health to work those hours. But on general grounds I take it that it would be better if we could get the hours reduced. May I tell the Committee the way in which I think it could be done? I hope it may be done on the Floor of the House, because I must get more information first. I will endeavour to secure on the Floor of the House that the Bill is altered to provide that for juveniles between 14 and 16 years of age the maximum permitted hours of working shall be reduced, by Statute, beyond what is now provided in the Bill. I have not yet sufficient information as to what

the number of hours should be. I am not at all satisfied that it should be the figure suggested, or that it should be 42, or 44. There are many things to be taken into consideration, but we should put into the Bill a provision which would reduce the hours further. I do not believe it will be possible to introduce that provision as early as we can introduce every other provision in the Bill. There must be sufficient time for the important industries to consider the question of reorganisation, but we could possibly bring the improvement into force within two years.

The other condition is that we must leave to a particular industry the opportunity of proving, if it can, that in each case a figure different from the statutory figure—it may not be as much as 48; it may be something between the two—is justified. My own view is that before that could be done three things would have to be proved: It would have to be proved in relation to that branch of industry, first, that the hours could not reasonably be regarded as injurious to the health of young people. If they are injurious, I do not think any more argument is needed. At this time of day Parliament is not going to tolerate hours of labour for young people longer than are good for their health. Secondly, it would be right to stipulate that the industry must prove that the hours are not only consistent with the health of the children, but that the organisation and proper carrying on of that industry make it desirable that the young people should work these longer hours side by side with their elders. The third condition, I think, would be that the industry would have to prove that the juveniles would be engaged in work of such a character as would familiarise them with, and help them to train for, processes in which the older people were employed and would be likely to lead up to their employment as adult workers in those processes.

I am not saying that these exceptions would be taken advantage of. I do not know to what extent they might be necessary, but it does seem that they constitute a fair proposal to make to industry. There are large numbers of employers who are sympathetic regarding the conditions of juvenile labour but who are at present committed to the most elaborate processes in industry which involve the working of younger and older people side

[Sir J. Simon.] by side. The machinery is built with that object. That is the method which has been developed, and we must, therefore, in the circumstances allow a little latitude, but the principle on which I would like us to proceed is that the Committee is not satisfied, any more than I am, with the present provision in the Bill and that we trust that it will not remain in its present form on the Report stage. On the other hand, it will not do to strike out one figure and put in another without considering the matters to which I have been bound to refer. I have done so, not because of any lack of boldness, but when dealing with British industry we should recognise that changes of this sort do require a little time to work out and that exceptions may be required when proved necessary. I trust that we can find a way of altering the Bill in the direction required, but I could not commit myself at this moment to saying what the substituted hours should be. There is nothing sacrosanct about the figure 40.

**Mr. Gibbins:** Or about 48.

**Sir J. Simon:** Or about 48 either, though I would use a different epithet about 48. We have to consider the right number of hours, remembering that it is a maximum and that it will be an offence in any circumstances to exceed it; in the second place, a rule ought to be laid down in the Bill for a future date. The Education Act does not come into force until 1939, but if we can make a rule that this improvement shall take effect in the early future, then we shall have done the best we can. In the last place we shall have to make possible the proving of an exceptional case only if the exceptional case can be proved consistent with the health of the young people concerned.

**Mr. Salt:** Would the suggestion regarding health cut out all repetition work?

**Viscountess Astor:** And would the exception with regard to children learning a trade be dependent on proof that they were really learning it?

**Sir J. Simon:** That is my idea. I could not formulate any precise statutory language at the moment as to what was in my mind, but it seemed to me that there were three conditions—

**Sir J. Haslam:** It was in the third proviso which the Minister mentioned.

**Sir J. Simon:** My idea was that there should be no exceptions to the lowering of the number of hours except in the three conditions which I stated. These were (a) that the higher figure of weekly hours would not be injurious to those concerned: (b) that the organisation and the proper carrying on of the industry made an increase in hours desirable; and (c) that the industry would have to prove that the juveniles would be engaged in work of such a character as would familiarise them with, and help them to train for, processes in which the older people were employed, and would be likely to lead up to their employment as adult workers in those processes. Those proposals are the result of a great deal of consideration on our part, and if the Committee think they are helpful and are prepared to wait for them, I shall be prepared to bring forward proposals on those lines. I have not the least doubt that as a result of my making this statement we shall receive a great deal of information before the Report stage. I would be happy indeed if the information sent to the Home Office proved to be in support of an improvement of this sort. We have to carry the mass of the people with us. Nothing has been more gratifying than the obvious desire of all in the Committee to contribute to a reform, and if what I am saying will lead to a response from industry outside, it will add enormously to the ease with which the reform can be introduced.

I do not entirely agree with the hon. Member for Central Leeds in an observation which he made on a subject which used to be one of controversy, when he thought he had discovered one argument in relation to our fiscal system. It is possible to carry that argument too far. The real anxiety of people who have been old Free Traders is lest, by going too rapidly in a different direction, we might do a serious injury to our export trades, which are absolutely essential to the life of millions of wage earners in this country. We have therefore to find a way of handling this matter which is not to be dealt with by saying, "We live in a tight little island, and we no longer rely on a purely Free Trade system." The hon. Member had a bunch of really good arguments, and I would not like to see that one among them.

**Mr. Denman:** I think that if the right hon. Gentleman had had to receive employers in pre-war days, he would pay a little more respect to that argument. It was not only our export trade. The fear was that our own market would be invaded by cheap goods and that that reform would so increase the costs of production that the home market would be lost.

**Sir J. Simon:** I am much obliged. Having avoided a controversy on one subject, we will not start one on another. So far as I am concerned, I do not believe the sentiment of the Committee and the sentiment of the country—and I know about the sentiment of the Government—is in favour of maintaining a system which is not progressive and decent in dealing with growing young children. All that I ask is that we should try to do the things we must do in a practical way, recognising what a complicated thing this is. There is a further reason why we must have a little delay. We should have to consider at the same time the amendment of the Shops Regulation Act, and we should have to do something about the unregulated trades. It is no good leaving a boy working a lift up and down in a hotel for unlimited hours while we are talking about limiting the hours for boys in factories. Therefore there is a considerable amount to be done. If we can deal with it in the same spirit as we have dealt with it to-day, I do not despair.

**Mr. Silkin:** Are we to take it that this is only to apply to children between 14 and 16?

**Sir J. Simon:** That is so.

**Mr. Buchanan:** May I ask the right hon. Gentleman a question? He is going to get inquiries made from industry, I understand, between this and the Report stage.

**Sir J. Simon:** Not for industry in particular. I hope to get it from workmen's organisations also.

**Mr. Buchanan:** Yes, I mean industry broadly. He wants to get this done between now and Report. Will it be done in time for the end of the Parliamentary Session?

**Sir J. Simon:** It has got to be. I think that what I have said to-day will

produce a great deal of additional information, but I want that additional information quite promptly, because we shall have to draft this in time for Report. I have no intention of allowing it to be held up because there are more people who want to say things.

**Mr. Buchanan:** I think this Clause ought to be postponed until the end of the Bill in order to give the right hon. Gentleman an opportunity to get the information. I am not going to press it, but I think this Clause should be postponed until the end of the Bill and then taken here in this Committee, where we can better discuss the details than downstairs on the Floor of the House.

**Sir J. Simon:** One must not, of course, jump into things like this. I will think over what the hon. Member has said and also consult my hon. Friend opposite. The difficulty that I see is this: It may be that if what I have suggested is carried out, we may find other Clauses which are also in a dubious condition, and I would like to get the advice of the draftsman. I am not in the least opposed to what the hon. Gentleman says, but we must arrange our time in the best possible way.

**Mr. Buchanan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Viant:** I am sure that I express the feelings of my colleagues when I say that we are grievously disappointed at the speech of the Home Secretary. We had reason to believe that the good spirit prevailing in the Committee this morning and the almost unanimous feeling about the ability of the community to-day to meet the problem of production was one that would be faced by the Home Secretary and the Government, who would appreciate that while we would not be prepared to legislate for the adult males, we did recognise the need for legislating for young persons. The thought went through my mind while the Home Secretary was speaking that had Lord Shaftesbury and his colleagues been as timid about legislating, there would have been no Factory Acts to-day. This Committee should make up its mind. There are representatives of employers here as well as those of us who are associated with the operatives. There need be no doubt about the opinion of the organisations representing the operatives. They are convinced of the need for a revision of the hours of labour. The reductions

are representative of employers here as well as those of us who are associated with the operatives. There need be no doubt about the opinion of the organisations representing the operatives. They are convinced of the need for a revision of the hours of labour. The reductions

[Mr. Viant.]

that have been effected in industry, with the exception of the mining industry, have been effected, it is true, through negotiations, but the argument that has been advanced this morning is that we should be prepared to defer this matter.

We know the arguments that will be advanced for no change. The bulk of the industrialists will argue for no change. It is to their interests, as they conceive, to put up those arguments, but sufficient evidence has been produced in this Committee, and there is sufficient available in the statistics with regard to production in industry to-day, to convince us of the need for revising hours of labour. I think this Committee ought to be prepared to legislate. It is true that the women and young persons are not in a position in their organisations to make a demand for or force a reduction in the hours of labour. We ought to be prepared to pass this Clause limiting the hours of labour to 40 for young persons. I am persuaded that the industrialists will fall into line. It is not such a huge problem. I happen to be associated with an industry enjoying a 44-hour week. The employers, when we were negotiating, said that this would bankrupt the industry, but we were compelled to force these demands upon the employers, and I think we ought to be prepared to choose the better way out now. In view of the improvements that are being effected in industry we should be prepared to legislate in the light of the facts that we have before us.

The right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary has already put quite a large

number of subjects aside in the hope we shall be able to give further consideration to them on the Report stage. Suppose he defers this Clause to the last stages of the Committee; we shall still be confronted with opposition. If we legislate then, we shall have to legislate in the face of some opposition. You will not get everyone outside unanimous for our proposal. I think it would have shown far better taste had the Home Secretary, in view of the almost unanimous view of the Committee, said that he was not prepared to allow these children to work in industry for longer than 40 hours. I hope it is not too late yet for the Committee to give further consideration to this question, and I make an appeal that the right hon. Gentleman will yield to these proposals. In any case we on this side should be prepared to take our proposal to a division and have it on record.

**Mr. McCorquodale:** I should like to say, "Thank you," to the Home Secretary. I think the statement that he has made to-day is entirely satisfactory.

**Mr. Viant:** You have not got anything.

**Mr. McCorquodale:** I think the Home Secretary has met us in a very frank and fair manner.

Ordered, "That the Debate be now adjourned."—[*Mr. Short.*]

Debate to be resumed on Thursday next.

Committee adjourned at Three Minutes before One o'Clock until Thursday, 22nd April, at Eleven o'Clock.

#### THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS

#### ATTENDED THE COMMITTEE:

Lloyd George, Major (*Chairman*)  
 Allen, Colonel Sandeman  
 Astor, Viscountess  
 Banfield, Mr.  
 Broad, Mr.  
 Bromfield, Mr.  
 Buchanan, Mr.  
 Bull, Mr.  
 Burke, Mr.  
 Cartland, Mr.  
 Clarke, Lieut.-Colonel  
 Denman, Mr.  
 Dobbie, Mr.  
 Emmott, Mr.  
 Fildes, Sir Henry  
 Frankel, Mr.  
 Gibbins, Mr.  
 Goodman, Colonel  
 Guest, Major  
 Haslam, Sir John  
 Hepworth, Mr.  
 Horsbrugh, Miss  
 Hunter, Mr.  
 Jones, Mr. Lewis  
 Kerr, Mr. Hamilton  
 Law, Mr.  
 Little, Sir Ernest Graham-

Llewellyn, Lieut.-Colonel  
 Lloyd, Mr.  
 McCorquodale, Mr.  
 Magnay, Mr.  
 Mander, Mr.  
 Palmer, Mr.  
 Porritt, Mr.  
 Reid, Mr. Allan  
 Rickards, Mr.  
 Ridley, Mr.  
 Ross Taylor, Mr.  
 Salt, Mr.  
 Short, Mr.  
 Silkin, Mr.  
 Silverman, Mr.  
 Simon, Sir John  
 Smiles, Lieut.-Colonel Sir Walter  
 Smith, Mr. Ellis  
 Touche, Mr.  
 Train, Sir John  
 Tufnell, Lieut.-Commander  
 Viant, Mr.  
 Wakefield, Mr.  
 Welsh, Mr.  
 White, Mr. Graham  
 Wragg, Mr.  
 Wright, Wing-Commander

Members who wish to have copies of the Official Report of Proceedings in Standing Committees sent to them are requested to give notice to that effect at the Vote Office.

No proofs can be supplied, but any corrections which Members desire in the bound volumes should be marked in this Report.

The copy of the Report containing such corrections must be returned to the Editor's room, House of Commons,

*not later than*  
*Saturday, 24th April, 1937.*

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT WILL GREATLY  
FACILITATE THE PROMPT PUBLICATION OF  
THE BOUND VOLUMES OF PROCEEDINGS  
IN STANDING COMMITTEES.

The House of Commons Official Report may be purchased directly from H.M. Stationery Office at the following addresses

Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2; 120 George Street,  
Edinburgh 2; 26 York Street, Manchester 1; 1 St. Andrew's Crescent,  
Cardiff; 80 Chichester Street, Belfast;  
or through any bookseller