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# THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT

By Wilfrid Eggleston

Ottawa, June 4—We are finding out how much more difficult it is to remedy economic abuses than to expose them. The mass-buying inquiry disclosed sickening conditions in Canadian industry: sweatshops, starvation wages, excessive hours, monopolies which were gouging the public and exploiting the primary producer. These revelations clearly laid on the several governments concerned the duty of eradicating them. The federal government having taken the initiative in uncovering the abuses, and being the most powerful governing body in Canada, it is naturally being looked to by the people to take action.

Action, of a sort, is being taken. We already have five bills in parliament in various stages of completion, and there are two or three more to come. But only the most optimistic and superficial observer supposes that when these are on the statute books all will be well again in the defective branches of Canadian industry and society. Indeed, will more than the remedy be touched? Will improvements in some departments of industrial life not be offset partly at least by losses in other ways? Will the new machinery of regulation and intervention be worth its salt?

(Disappointing Legislation)  
 We shall see. But meanwhile the implementation of the royal commission report has been so far disappointing. What with the constitutional difficulty, the division of opinion as to the remedy, the confusion between the symptoms and the causes of our economic diseases, the net result is likely to fall a long way short of ending sweat-shops, the exploitation of the primary producer, and all the other evils we have had dinned into our ears for 15 months.

Let's see what is lined up, so far: Teeth are being put into the Minimum Wage and Maximum Hours acts. Offences are — if the constitutional hurdle can be negotiated — to become indictable, under the Criminal Code. Employers who break these laws are now to be subject to a maximum of two years imprisonment, fines of five thousand dollars.

(Heavy Penalties For Unfair Practices)  
 Then unfair competition is to be heavily penalized. It, too, is to become an indictable offense, making offenders subject to imprisonment and fines. What is unfair competition? That will be the rub. However, competition which obviously sets out to end competition and create monopoly by eliminating the other competitors will be specifically laid down as unfair.

These changes would have sounded much more promising if the Minister of Justice, introducing them in the House, had not admitted that in his opinion they were of doubtful validity, had not read opinions of eminent counsel to the same effect. If even the minister who pilots the bills thinks they may not stand up in the courts the persons prosecuted under these acts are certain to be sure that they will not, with the result that appeals, litigation, possible upsets in the higher courts, will almost certainly accompany any effort to enforce them.

Then we have amendments to the Weights and Measures Act, aimed at ending short-weight, deceptive packaging, etc. We have livestock amendments improving present practice in regard to reports from stockyards and inspection of stock and packers' products. We have a new Fair Wages and Hours bill which will insist on these conditions in any government contract, or work done with the assistance of government subsidies, grants, bonuses, etc. We have a minor change in the Industrial Disputes Act.

(Are Happy Days Here?)  
 Add them all together. Do they spell the Millennium? And as though they were not shaky enough as it was, along came the collapse of the N.R.A. while they were under consideration, warning our legislators of the constitutional pitfalls when federal governments start interfering too minutely with state or provincial matters.

Mr. Bennett, looking and sounding something like a Weary Titan, assured Mr. Mackenzie King last week that he was as anxious as anybody to bring the session to a close, and hold an election. The only consideration which would delay the latter was the need of revising the election lists so as not to disenfranchise a lot of junior Canadians, just reaching voting age. Lists will be revised by the 15th of August, it is expected.

(An Election Guess)  
 This suggests that the end of the session may not be far away. It might finish by the 21st of June. It

could finish even earlier. But there are still 12 or 15 bills to be passed through both houses, and unless they are to be skimmed over, a fair amount of time will be necessary. An election, in view of Mr. Bennett's remark, can hardly be expected before the 19th of August. Indeed, if one wants to guess at a date, the 19th of August is just as good as anybody else's, with the exception of Mr. Bennett, who could, at a pinch, outguess anybody else on this important matter.

Mr. Stevens continued his drive against monopoly and unfair trade practise with an interesting fifteen minutes in the House on the subject of patents. Some manufacturers in Canada, he said, notably those of electric light bulbs, were using the Patent Act as an auxiliary duty, in spite of the fact that they were already afforded plenty of protection in the tariff. As a result they were selling bulbs of 100 watt power which could be imported and sold for 28 to 35 cents a piece after paying all duties and other charges, for 55 and 60 cents each. Why don't dealers import them then? The answer is that such shipments are banned at the border on the ground that the importation of these bulbs infringes Canadian patents, despite the fact that they have satisfied all patent requirements in the country of origin.

If Mr. Stevens' charge is right, consumers are paying nearly double what they should do for certain light bulbs. And these days thirty cents is thirty cents of any man's money. (Earnest Effort To Be Fair)  
 The Secretary of State, piloting the new Patent Act, promised to look into the matter. He hoped critics would give the new bill a trial, because it had been very painstakingly prepared, and aimed to be fair to all parties concerned, the inventors, the exploiters (in the good sense this time) the consuming public.

George Coote, U.P.A. for Macleod, gave another illustration of what he felt was undue advantage arising out of patent monopoly. A grain cleaner used on separators in the west cost from \$420 to \$460. It could be made in Calgary for about \$200, he said, were it not for the fact that existing patents forbid its manufacture. He thought a royalty of \$25 would be ample in such a case.

In Canada gold is still officially valued at \$20.67 an ounce, though its exchange value in Canadian currency is over \$35 an ounce. Premier Bennett told the House last week that a bill would probably be introduced giving Council power, on proclamation, to re-value gold. In some quarters he was thought to have in mind the possibility that a still higher revaluation of gold might be contemplated by the United States, or that a general world revaluation of gold so as to permit stabilizing exchange might soon be worked out.

(Insurance Policy Loans)  
 The House of Commons spent a lively hour on the subject of interest on loans secured by policy-holders from insurance companies. The originator of the bill was the U.F.A. member for Macleod, who wanted a legal maximum of four per cent. The banking and commerce committee raised this to five per cent. The present rate is from six to ten per cent. But a good deal of opposition developed to the amended Coote bill. One member (J. F. White of London) even argued that it would be better to make it impossible to secure loans at all rather than encourage them by lowering the rate. But Mr. Coote was warmly supported by two Conservative members, Messrs. Church and Arthurs. One point stressed was that it was the depositors own money which was loaned, and that it enjoyed therefore the best security in the world, better even than federal government bonds. Since government loans paid only 3½ per cent these days, why should a loan with even better security pay from eight to ten? But opposition was voiced on equally numerous grounds, E. J. Young of Weyburn suggesting that life insurance was primarily for the benefit of the beneficiaries, the wives and children, rather than the policy-holder. It was the only legacy, he said, which could not be seized by creditors. If the loaning rate was very low, creditors might induce persons to borrow on their policies to meet their accounts, and thus secure in that way what was impossible in any other.

With John I. McFarland ordered by his physician to take things easy for a while, there is greater need than before for prompt action regarding a Grain Board, one of whose duties, it is expected, will be to take over the wheat holdings now controlled by McFarland. A carry-over of 170 million bushels looms, and if a medium-heavy crop comes along, there won't be elevator space in Canada to hold it all.

# SLATS' DIARY

BY ROSS FARQUHAR

Friday—Joe Hix told pa it had been his Ambishun to be a moddle Hus-bend. But he wassent so keen he told pa about being a Wirking Moddle.



Saturday—Mrs. Gillems Neace witch got married to a fella in the winter last January has separated from her husband all red-dy. Mrs. Gillem felt offly bad about it but Ant Emmy consoled her by telling about her sister witch had got married three times before she had enuff Xperience to make a success of marryage.

Sunday—I gess pa pulled a Boner tonite when he and I and ma went to see Mrs. Eldreds paintings. she ast pa to be Frank and tell her just what he thot of them and pa looked at 1 of them and sed the body was a little Bit out of perportion with the hed and 1 cow she painted. Then Mrs Eldred Xplained that what he was looking at was not a Cow but was intitled The Golf Corse by the Lake.

Munday—pa was asting ma what she wood do in Case he went & dyed and she sed she new she woodent never go to wirk in a Offise agen beuz she suddent stand it to have enny men telling her what to do ever agen.

Tuesday—Hatty Selkirk says her husband is getting absent Minded she gesses beuz all red-dy this weak he

has kist her 2 times.

Wednesday—well Ant Emmy is all at See. Yesterday she red in the paper that the Senator from this state is a Vegetarian and today the noose paper where pa winks at sed he was a Octogenarian. She washes the papers wood get to gather and make there minds up.

Thursday—Lem Ray quit his job down to the Stone Quarrie today be-cuz 1 of the frends witch is a Polli-tishun told him they was a chance to get on Relief.

Let us destroy the two causes of all our trouble — selfishness and greed. On the basis of universal brotherly love the world will then be a better place to live in and we shall be happy and contented. There is a way out — for the door leading to it is marked: "Service!"

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