

The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907, as the title indicates, was not actually enacted until 1907, but it was introduced into the House of Commons on December 17 by the Minister of Labour, and on account of its importance deserves to receive mention here. The act was the outcome of the observations and investigations made by the Deputy Minister of Labour into the strike at the coal mines of the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company at Lethbridge, Alberta, during 1906, which was finally settled by his intervention and mediation, and the long continuance of which was in some degree responsible for the scarcity of fuel throughout a large portion of western Canada during the winter of 1906-07. The Deputy Minister in his report to the Minister of Labour in December, 1906, of the settlement effected at Lethbridge and of the situation he had found in existence between the disputing parties, made the following recommendations :

Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, 1907.

The situation which called for the act.

Inasmuch as coal is in this country one of the foremost necessities, on which not only a great part of the manufacturing and transportation industries, but also, as the recent experience has shown, much of happiness and life itself depends, it would appear that if legislation can be devised which, without encroaching upon the recognized rights of employers and employees, will at the same time protect the public, the State would be justified in enacting any measure which will make the strike or lockout in a coal mine a thing of the past. Such an end, it would appear, might be achieved, at least in part, were provisions made whereby, as in the case of the Railway Labour Disputes Act, all questions in dispute might be referred to a board empowered to conduct an investigation under oath, with the additional feature, perhaps, that such reference should not be optional but obligatory, and pending the investigation and until the board has issued its finding the parties be restrained on pain of penalty from declaring a lockout or strike. In view of past experience and the present situation, I would therefore respectfully recommend that the attention of parliament be, at as early a date as possible, invited to a consideration of some such or other measure with a view of preventing a possible recurrence of an experience such as this country has been forced to witness during the past month, and of promoting in the interests of the whole people the cause of industrial peace.

A Bill was introduced to give effect to these recommendations, which after being actively debated by both houses of parliament become law.

The outstanding feature of the new act is its provision that before a strike or lockout can be legally declared in a difference between employer or employees in connection with a mine or any industry connected with a public utility, the difference in question shall be submitted to a Board of Conciliation and Investigation established under the act with a view to arriving at a settlement. Put in other words, the act demands an investigation before the declaration of a strike in the class of industries indicated, in order that the parties to the differences may be brought face to face, and that degree of conference

The chief feature of the act.