

PRESENT CONDITION OF WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION LAWS, AND POSSIBLE CHANGES

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IN APPROACHING an examination of the present condition of our workmen's compensation laws, and possible changes, I have dipped into the stream of experience of this association. Its published records keep alive the hopes and memories of administrators who loved their tasks and who were refreshed by the fellowship of our meetings, from year to year. As I stand before you now, I can find no better words to express my feeling than those of Past President Duxbury, of Minnesota, when he addressed the 1930 convention on the "Purpose, Nature, and Character of Compensation Laws."^{1a}

It has been my privilege [said Mr. Duxbury] to attend ten consecutive conventions of this association. It is quite impossible for me to express what I feel I owe to these conventions. While I am conscious that I have not been able properly to understand or retain even a substantial portion of the learning and wisdom of those who have taken part in the programs and debates, yet I feel that what little I have been able to comprehend has been fully supplemented by the inspiration incident to contact with men and women of the character of those who have attended these meetings and taken part in the proceedings.

At that time (1930) there were still present in our ranks many commissioners who knew from personal experience why workmen's compensation laws had been enacted to replace common law and statutory liability remedies in the field of work injuries. Today few of the men who took part in the fight to replace liability with compensation remedies are left. The generation for which Past President Duxbury spoke was sure that workmen's compensation law, applied by administrative agencies, was better than common law and liability remedies applied by courts; and, of course, there was also the conviction that the existing laws could and should be improved. Mr. Duxbury said:

I believe that all compensation laws are good, but some are better than others. None of them, however, are perfect, and all of them need revision and amendment so as better to accom-

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This address, made at the invitation of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions, at the Thirty-Sixth Annual Convention of the Association in Milwaukee, Sept. 26, 1950, offers Mr. Dawson's own points of view, which are not necessarily those of the United States Department of Labor. Mr. Dawson was formerly Secretary-Treasurer of the Association.

1. Duxbury, F. A.: Purpose, Nature, and Character of Compensation Laws, Bulletin 536, United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1931, (a) p. 121; (b) p. 129.