

# REFLECTIONS

BY THE EDITOR

**S**PEAKING generally, Canada has been fairly proud of the Lemieux Act which was intended to prevent strikes on railways and other large public service institutions. The results of its operation were such as to bring a great deal of credit to those who framed the Act and those who were superintending its enforcement. It is the fate of human laws to be weak in certain particulars, and the Lemieux Act is no exception to that rule. It comes close to being a compulsory arbitration law but it just falls short. It compels a reference to arbitration on the part of both employers and employees before a strike or lock-out may take place. When, however, the board of arbitration or conciliation has made its report, it is open to either party to reject the award. This is the weakness.

In the case of the Grand Trunk Railway which is now suffering from a strike, there was an arbitration or conciliation board and it made a recommendation or award. Apparently neither side was willing to accept that award and after some weeks of fruitless negotiations the men walked out. As only the conductors, brakemen and baggagemen were affected the railway has been able to continue its service in a limited way. If the Lemieux Act had been a compulsory arbitration act both sides would have been forced to accept the award and the strike would not have occurred.

**I**T would seem as if the time had come for strengthening the Lemieux Act. It has been of considerable benefit but it has failed to prevent two of the worst strikes that have ever disturbed Canadian commerce and industry. The strike among the coal miners of Cape Breton dragged along for a year and caused a great financial loss to both employers and employees. The present railway strike will cost the Grand Trunk a great deal of money and will mean an almost equal loss to the employees who have gone out. No country in the world has been able to prevent strikes. No law yet on the statute books of any country has proved equal to the settling of all disputes between employers and employees. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to believe that such an act could be framed.

In these days commerce and industry have become so important that any interruption caused by a strike or lock-out causes much inconvenience and great financial loss which must be borne by innocent parties. It seems ridiculous and it certainly is not economic nor scientific. When a strike occurs on a railway, the people in the towns which are served only by that line suffer greatly by their inability to receive and ship supplies. The factories in the town are handicapped, the producers in that district find their perishable products going to waste, and the wage-earners are compelled to live in idleness. All these are innocent parties who are forced to sit quietly by and wait patiently for the end of a struggle which is not of their making nor ending.

**T**HERE seem to be only two remedies available, compulsory arbitration and public ownership. There are grave objections to both but the thinking man will give these remedies serious study and consideration and try to make up his mind which will be best for the country as a whole. With the evidence of the past three years before us Canadians must realise that the situation is most serious.

Most people will shy at compulsory arbitration. A railway, telephone or telegraph company will hesitate about accepting a compulsory arbitration act which will allow a board of arbitrators to settle the rate of wages it shall pay its employees. A company which is not at liberty to look over its accounts, examine its revenues and expenditures and decide what rate of wages it shall pay its employees would feel itself seriously hampered. A compulsory arbitration act might gravely affect the willingness of capitalists to invest in public service corporations. For example, if Canada were to pass a compulsory arbitration act which would apply to all Canadian railways it would be difficult for these railways to float their bonds and sell their stock to foreign investors, with the result that the progress of the country might be arrested.

Again, the railway unions have always opposed compulsory arbitration. The unions claim that if their right to strike is taken away from them and they are compelled to work on a schedule of wages fixed by an arbitration board, that their individual and corporate liberty is reduced to a minimum. They claim that they must always have the privilege of using their one great weapon in a fight for higher wages and better conditions when these are absolutely necessary to the well-being of the men concerned.

Nevertheless, in spite of this historic attitude on the part of both

employers and employees the general interests of a people demand that industrial warfare shall be controlled and limited. It is not wise and neither is it fair that the country as a whole should suffer because a small fraction of its people are not able to agree as to whether a certain workman's wages shall be \$2.45 or \$2.50 a day. The loss to the workingman if he is compelled to take the lower wages is small as compared with the loss which must be borne by his neighbour who is thrown out of work because of the strike and does not receive strike benefits. In the same way the loss to the stock-holder in a company which is forced to pay the extra five cents per day is small as compared with the loss of the investors in other companies whose business is interrupted by a conflict in which their companies are not directly concerned.

The question of compulsory arbitration should certainly be taken up at the next session of parliament and an attempt made to find out whether the people would prefer to abolish or to amend the Lemieux Act.

**L**AST week there was some discussion in this column with reference to the "Made in Canada" campaign of the Canadian manufacturers. Regret was expressed that this campaign was not being pursued with the same vigour that it was ten years ago. Our discussion has caused one manufacturer to write us a letter of congratulation which has given both pleasure and pain. In the course of his remarks he used these words: "We hope by persevering to live down the prejudice that now exists against Canadian goods." This is a statement which, if true, is strong enough to disturb the mind of every patriotic Canadian.

Is this manufacturer correct? Is there a prejudice amongst Canadian buyers against Canadian-made goods? We are inclined to doubt it. There are a few foolish consumers with more money than judgment who buy foreign-made goods in preference to domestic. Yet this class of buyers is not very large. There must always be special classes of goods made in foreign countries which will vie in quality and workmanship with similar goods produced in Canada. There are certain classes of manufactures in which Great Britain excels the world. There are other classes in which France and Germany and the United States excel the world. Therefore it is natural that the man who has plenty of money should occasionally prefer some foreign article irrespective of the price. The Canadian manufacturer must face this in his own country just as the United States manufacturer must face it in his own country and the German manufacturer in his.

With the majority of the goods sold in our retail shops this argument does not apply. In the main the customer buys that brand of goods which is most familiar to him. If the goods are not branded the customer must go it blind, and trust to his own judgment and the judgment of the salesman. If the goods are branded he trusts to the brand. If the Canadian brands were as well known as the United States brands, the Canadian consumer would naturally prefer them, but he cannot be expected to prefer unadvertised Canadian goods as against well advertised foreign goods.

**I**F the Canadian manufacturer will exercise as much patience and persistence in his advertising campaign as the foreign manufacturer has exercised, he will have equal results providing his goods are equal. The difficulty with the Canadian manufacturer is that he is neither sufficiently patient nor sufficiently persistent. This is well illustrated by a letter received some time ago from a manufacturer in Montreal who told the story of how he spent five hundred dollars in one paper advertising a brand of household goods without getting any direct return. This man was not aware that to make that brand of goods familiar to the buyers in Montreal alone, would probably require an expenditure of five years' patient effort and fifty thousand dollars of advertising space. If he had consulted an advertising expert that expert would probably have told him that he would be wasting his five hundred dollars in indulging in such a picayune campaign.

If the Canadian manufacturer intends to impress his wares upon the imagination of his fellow citizens he must use arguments and methods which are convincing. He must wait patiently ten, fifteen, or even twenty years for his results. Rome was not built in a day, and neither is a manufacturer's reputation made in a year. While this is true of the individual manufacturer it is also true of the Canadian manufacturer as a whole. There was a time when the people of Canada bought ninety per cent. of their manufactured goods from Great Britain and the United States. To-day the people of this country buy a larger quantity of Canadian-made goods than they do of foreign goods. The Canadian manufacturer has gained tremendously in twenty-five years. If he will pursue his task with the same energy and ability for another quarter of a century there will be comparatively few foreign goods sold in this market.

It is hard to believe that there is a prejudice against goods made in Canada. Where foreign goods displace Canadian goods it is more likely to be the result of Habit or Better-Value.

## APPRECIATIVE

The Canadian Courier (Toronto), is thoroughly up to the times. In its current issue it contained a full page of sketches of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his party at Port Arthur last Saturday, and a carefully prepared article on the result of the Manitoba general elections on Monday, together with any quantity of seasonable pictures and stories. To one familiar with the getting up of an illustrated weekly, the wonder is how they did it so quickly. "The man behind" must have been on the job every minute. — Cornwall Freeholder, July 15.