

# The Journal of Commerce

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## The Journal of Commerce

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### Special Articles

**Investments of the Belligerent Powers.**  
By W. W. Swanson.

**Intensive Farming.**  
By A. A. Ayer.

**The Crop Situation in Canada.**  
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**The Political Situation in Great Britain.**  
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**Newfoundland Trade Notes.**  
(Special Correspondence.)

**Canadian Dry Goods Situation.**  
(Staff Correspondence.)

**The Provincial Exposition at Quebec.**  
(Special Correspondence.)

### PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

Editorials:	Page.
The Railway Trouble in the States.....	1
Small Savings and War Loans .....	2
The Governing Classes .....	2
Roumania .....	2
Investments of the Belligerent Powers.....	3
The Crop Situation in Canada .....	4
Canadian Bank Clearings .....	4
The Political Situation in Great Britain.....	5
Intensive Farming .....	5
Among the Companies .....	6-7
Permanent Pensions Board .....	8
"Mentioned in Dispatches" .....	9
Banker's Unique Advertising .....	10
Must Pay Taxes on Mineral Lands.....	10
Interchange of Credit Information .....	11
New Zealand's War Budget .....	11
Correspondence.....	12
"The Exporter's Field" .....	13
Fire Insurance Investigation .....	14
A. O. U. W. Policies Reduced .....	14
Newfoundland Trade Notes .....	16
Canada-Trinidad Trade .....	16
Canadian Dry Goods Situation .....	17
The Provincial Exposition at Quebec.....	18
Coal and Iron the Basic Factors of Economic Success .....	19
British Shell Output .....	19
Western Farmers' Wheat Combine .....	20
Canadian Northern Statement .....	20
Commodity Markets .....	21-22
Trade Inquiries .....	23
Shipping and Railway Notes .....	24

## The Railway Trouble in the States

THE dispute between the trainmen of the American railways and the railway companies, which in one form or another has been in progress since March last, is one fraught with the gravest consequences to the public. The number of workmen who, through their several organizations, are acting together is about 400,000. They seem to be practically unanimous in their demands. After some negotiations in the early stages of the difficulty, the representatives of labor asked an expression of opinion from their members as to the propriety of a strike in event of their demands not being granted. In response 94 per cent of the men declared for a strike. The representatives of the two interests failing to agree, the Federal Board of Mediation and Conciliation offered its good offices, which both parties accepted, but no settlement was reached. Then, when a strike seemed about to occur, President Wilson took up the matter, and brought the two parties together at Washington.

The trainmen demanded that the principle of an eight hour day be accepted; that for this eight hours' service they receive the same pay as they now receive for ten hours; and that time and a half be allowed for work beyond the eight hours.

Originally the idea of an eight hour day was based on the contention that eight hours' labor was enough for a workman, and that in justice to his health, to his family and to his duties of citizenship he should not be required to work for more than eight hours. In England the movement found poetic expression:

"Eight hours' work,  
Eight hours' play,  
Eight hours' sleep,  
Eight shillings a day."

This would hardly be accepted by the workman of to-day as a correct expression of his case. The "eight shillings a day" is not now held in reverence. A much higher standard is claimed.

In the present difficulty not much has been heard of the claims of health or family or citizenship as arguments for a restriction of the hours of labor. It is not proposed to prohibit or even to discourage men from working more than eight hours a day. The question is really one of wages, and the arrangement sought by the men would, if adopted, create a desire on the part of many of them to work extra hours for the sake of the higher pay to be received.

The President's proposal was that the railways grant the request of the men for the eight hours day—of course, at the pay of ten hours—and that a commission be appointed to inquire into the remainder of the claim.

That meant the granting of a large part of the men's demand and the referring of the remainder to arbitration—for the commission would be an arbitration. The railway representatives strongly resisted this suggestion. "It is not arbitration that the President proposes," said one of them; "it is surrender." They claimed that the men were fairly paid, that they had received substantial increases of wages in recent years, that what the men asked would add perhaps \$100,000,000 to the cost of management, that traffic rates now authorized will not produce the revenue required for such a scale of wages, and that public opinion does not encourage the granting of increased freight rates to the roads. But, the managers added, if the men thought the existing conditions unfair the companies would agree to refer the whole question to arbitration. The granting, without inquiry, of a large part of the men's demands and the referring of the remainder to a commission would, the representatives of the company claimed, be a very one-sided arrangement, lacking the essential elements of arbitration. On the other hand, the men claimed that the basic eight hour day is one of the essentials of the labor movement of to-day and therefore they were not willing to treat it as a subject for arbitration.

Discussion along these lines failed to reach a settlement. The representatives of the men then issued their order for a general strike to take effect on the morning of Monday, Sept. 4. That which had previously been regarded as a somewhat threatening situation now became an alarming one, for the carrying out of the strike order would have paralyzed the business of the United States and caused widespread confusion, loss and suffering. It is not surprising that in such a situation President Wilson felt it to be his duty to invite the assistance of Congress in devising measures to bring about the results that had not been produced by negotiation between the contending parties. With a promptness that is unusual and with little dissenting opinion the two Houses of Congress supported the President and enacted measures which gave effect to a large part of his plan, and which the representatives of the workmen were content to accept for the time being. The eight hour day is recognized by law and the companies are virtually required to pay the ten hours wage for the eight hours day. Beyond this the questions in dispute are to be enquired into by a commission to be appointed by the President. In view of this enactment the strike order, which was to have taken effect yesterday, was cancelled. For the moment the people breathe more freely, for the many evils that would have followed the strike are averted. The workmen, though all that they claimed has not yet been granted, will feel that they have won an important victory. The railway managers, of course, cannot be expected to feel satisfied. They are reported to be considering