

noticing. There is a large appropriation for Toronto harbor, another for Kingston, and for several other lake ports. And this, while the Montreal Harbor Commissioners are compelled to provide for the interest on a bonded debt created, not for the improvement of the harbor, but for the removal of obstructions in the channel of the River St. Lawrence, about half way between Montreal and Quebec. It is inconceivable to us how the policy of expending Dominion money on many of the works included in the present estimates can be defended so long as aid is refused to what must be acknowledged to be a legitimate public work, and one that was recognized as such forty years ago. In the United States the improvements on the great rivers such as the Mississippi are provided for by the Federal Government; and we venture to affirm that it would be impossible to cite a case in which improvements of such a character have been defrayed out of local funds, the effect being to give an advantage to the foreign route over that on which we have expended such enormous sums in order to secure the trade. Every argument that can be used in favor of the expenditure on our canals would apply equally to the improvement of the St. Lawrence.

BANKRUPTCY LEGISLATION.

That justice is slow and dear, creditors are having brought home to them in the serious losses that are occurring from day to day, and there is no slight outcry that justice is not to be had even at the sacrifice of time and money. Debtors have completely collared their creditors, and are showing an amount of skill in keeping what they have, or in preventing it going to those who ought to have a fair share of the assets, which argues well for the manner in which opportunities may be improved. By means of Preferential Judgments, Bills of Sale, Chattel Mortgages, Mortgages on Real Estate, Warehouse Receipts, Leases for long periods made when confessedly Bankrupt, and numerous other fraudulent contrivances, creditors are being made to feel their own helplessness and their debtors' powers. It need, therefore, surprise no one that, from Halifax to Winnipeg, complaints of the want of means for defence are both loud and deep.

Previous to the assembling of Parliament it was freely announced in the newspapers that Mr. D. Macmaster, M.P., had been requested by the Council of the Board of Trade of Montreal to bring in a measure for the relief of creditors, and it

appears that the co-operation of the various Boards of Trade throughout the Dominion was requested by the Montreal Boards so that the proposed measure might receive the amount of attention that a subject so important is entitled to. Among the Boards there was not a single dissident, the necessity for legislation being too seriously felt to admit of question. Valuable time was lost, yet the promised measure did not appear; the loss and mischievous frauds increased, but no one appeared to regard commercial grievances as worthy the attention of the Legislature. True, Mr. Beatty introduced a measure which is not likely to receive the support of a single Board of Trade in the Dominion. One strong impression created by that Bill was, that it was much better calculated to burke the whole question than to promote sound legislation. Naturally the various Boards began to inquire what had become of the Act to which they had been requested to extend support, and it may well be, that the Montreal Board of Trade finds itself in a rather unenviable position, after having acted as if the introduction of the promised measure were not a matter of doubt. Toronto has clearly abandoned hope of relief from this quarter, and has appointed a committee to prepare a Bill, with a view to having it submitted to Parliament during the present session; and Montreal has, through the Board of Trade, communicated to the three City Members, something of the grievances from which creditors are suffering.

Whether any substantial relief will result from all this agitation during the present session will of course depend on the manner in which the question is regarded and dealt with by the people's representatives. That it is a question of widespread importance needs no saying; it is not a party question, and may therefore be urged without giving rise to any feeling on either side of the House.

What is it that Parliament is asked to do? Merely to give permission to have the estates of insolvent debtors distributed fairly and inexpensively, instead of compelling creditors to continue to suffer the injustice by which their losses are at present aggravated, by refusing to pass a measure for their relief. That is surely a request of a most reasonable kind. If any attempted persecution were in question there would be good ground for apprehending a refusal, but nothing of the sort is aimed at; all that is sought is that each creditor of an insolvent estate shall receive his fair share of the proceeds, and no more, and that creditors be left to effect the distribution among themselves,

untrammelled by cumbrous formalities and useless costs—sufficient means being provided to redress wrongs when they occur.

Should Parliament refuse to accede to a request so evidently just, it will be likely to raise inquiries as to which are the important classes in the community Parliament considers worthy of attention. The "Deceased Wife's Sister's" Bill, for instance, played no mean part before the House, and no one complains that it did so; but will any one assert that the object sought to be accomplished by that Bill was comparable with the distribution of insolvent estates in the interest of the public. For one person affected by the first Bill, ten thousand are interested in the enactment of the second. Creditors are therefore unlikely to admit that the object for which they are struggling is insignificant, either actually or comparatively. Legislation for the administration of justice between debtor and creditor is unfortunately in so unsatisfactory a condition in every Province of the Dominion as in many respects to be contemptible. One may hold the most unqualified admission of indebtedness, with a positive undertaking to pay on a given date, and yet be exposed to endless litigation in the attempt to recover payment, just as if the amount claimed were really in doubt. Let the character of the debt change, however, and let a landlord appear as the creditor, then everything is changed:—a landlord's warrant, issued by the creditor himself, addressed to any person he likes, achieves instantly what will take courts, lawyers, sheriffs and bailiffs, months or years to achieve in Ontario, even when the indebtedness is clearly established; while in Quebec the summariness and efficiency of the means for the protection of landlords are very little inferior.

So much for the traditional consequence in the eyes of the law of him who happens to have invested in real estate. Is it that the landlord is in greater peril than the creditor whose principal, as well as profit, is at stake, that this absurd discrimination is made? Or is it that a landlord is so much more upright than an ordinary creditor, that the former is vested with so extensive a power over the estate of his debtor, while the latter is practically denied any effective remedy for the recovery of his claim? and if not, on what principle of right can the denial of fair-play to an ordinary creditor be defended?

This kind of class legislation has existed too long; if any discrimination could be justified it would be that in favor of him