

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S MESSAGE.

The Message from the President of the United States read before Congress on the 2nd inst. is a very colourless deliverance. All the powers and the interests to which it makes any reference will accept it as being void of offence. Mr. Roosevelt discusses several delicate topics from the standpoint of one who thinks there is "much to be said on both sides," but who declines to pass judgment regarding either of them. There is too evident a strain after non-committal utterances to give the Message the force which lends effective influence to a document emanating from the chief ruler of a great commercial nation. A large portion of the Message is taken up by such reflections as are appropriate in an editorial, but out of place in a State paper. The country justly expects a Presidential Message to announce what policy has been decided upon by the Government, what are its objects, what the prospects of its success, what the Government has done and what it intends doing, each stated specifically, are of vital interest to the people and to the world. But strings of semi-philosophical, moral reflections upon existing or possible conditions, have no interest nor any value commensurate with the dignity of their source or of the occasion on which they were uttered.

In preparing his Message the President was like a driver passing over a narrow ridge with a ditch on either side of the road. If he had condemned Trusts because of their being organizations to control and monopolize the prices of certain merchantable products, he would thereby have antagonized organized capital, and by direct inference have also offended organized labour, for a Trust and a Trades Union have the same economic basis. He, however, intimated that some action should be taken "to do away with any evils" in these corporations.

In regard to this the President said:—

"I believe that monopolies, unjust discriminations, which prevent or cripple competition, fraudulent over-capitalization, and other evils in trust organizations and practices which injuriously affect interstate trade can be prevented under the power of the Congress to 'regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several states' through regulations and requirements operating directly upon such commerce, the instrumentalities thereof, and those engaged therein."

We should have liked to hear the views of Mr. Roosevelt as to the method of eradicating these evils by legislation without interfering with '*the inviolability of property*,' which he declared was "a fundamental base of civilization." He considered that a reduction of the tariff would be "wholly ineffective in reaching the evils of the trusts," and deprecated tariff revision while the country was so prosperous.

In regard to the labour and capital problem the President drew a parallel between Trusts and Trades Unions. He said:

"Exactly as business men find they must often work through corporations, and as it is a constant tendency of these corporations to grow larger, so it is often necessary for laboring men to work in federations, and these have become important factors of modern industrial life. Both kinds of federation, capitalistic and labor, can do much good, and as a necessary corollary they can both do evil."

Capital and labor should each "conform to the fundamental rules of obedience to the law; of individual freedom; of justice and fair dealing towards all."

The Message announces that reciprocal trade relations will be established with Newfoundland; that the Isthmian Canal will be built; that an all American Pacific cable will be constructed to the Philippines. He urges legislation to protect game, to develop Alaska and to promote agricultural interests. The Presidential Message of 1902 is remarkable for its having not an irritating phrase calculated to wound the susceptibilities of any foreign power, or disturb any domestic interest.

CLOSE OF NAVIGATION, 1902.

The close of navigation indicates a condition which puts a heavy handicap on the port of Montreal, as it does also on all the river and lake ports of Canada. We are so familiar with railway facilities that it is difficult even to imagine how the business of the country was conducted in the winters before these modern necessities were built. The truth is, there was little business transacted in those days when transportation by water was suspended, when wheeled vehicles were useless, and sleighs far from reliable for long trips. When we consider that this port is closed every season for five months its development has been remarkable.

The shipping business since May last has not been as profitable as was anticipated. The two drawbacks are, high rates of marine insurance and excessive competition. The removal of the first difficulty is understood to be engaging the serious attention of the Government, the minister of Marine and Fisheries having expressed his determination to make every effort to improve the navigation of the St. Lawrence. The competition trouble is a very complicated question which, in the long run, will cure itself.

The number of vessels which arrived in Montreal this season was 757, against 742 last year. The total tonnage of last season was 1,453,048 which was exceeded this year by about 75,000 tons. All the accidents in the channel arose from incompetent