

what possible objection can be taken, in logic and reason, by a foreign government to the right of the landlord—the Provincial Government—to manage his own property in the way that he deems best? If any State in the American Union had made a regulation as to the terms on which it would lease its own property to people who desired to use it, and any foreign government challenged the right of the State to do so, the challenge would be regarded as very ridiculous. It would be well for our American friends to try to look at the matter from that viewpoint.

If the American commission be appointed and come to Canada, its members will, of course, be welcomed and treated with all courtesy. But what can they learn that they do not already know? There is no Dominion law to which they can reasonably take exception, and there is small probability that the Provincial Governments concerned will yield to threats. Retaliation is a game that can be played by the United States and by Canada, to the annoyance and disadvantage of both, but not to the good of either.

Overalls

THE rise and spread of the overalls movement is one of the remarkable features of current events. Since the cause from which it springs is the same in nearly all places, it needed only a start to be widely adopted. Within a few days all over the North American continent there have sprung up associations and meetings resolving to meet the high cost of clothing by abandoning ordinary costume and assuming the denim garb usually worn by workmen while on duty. In some communities the movement has been adopted by almost all classes. By many people the economic idea of the movement is accepted, but it takes the form of a determination to wear old clothes rather than of resorting to the cotton overall.

The movement, even if only temporary, will do good by creating a spirit of economy that is sadly needed. To a large extent the high cost of living is, of course, the result of world-wide conditions arising from the war. But in a very considerable degree the situation is as it was described by the late James J. Hill before the war, when he said that "the high cost of living was explained by the cost of high living." The tendency towards extravagance which was noticed by Mr. Hill at that time has been accentuated in later days. The high prices of commodities are not more remarkable than the willingness of many people to pay the prices. To the more careful classes the higher wages of the time bring the thought that the value of wages is to be measured by their purchasing power, and since the higher compensation which many receive does not command the comfort of former times, and

does not admit of any saving for the inevitable rainy day, they realize that their condition is not one of real prosperity. But there is abundant evidence that a large portion of the people do not look at the situation in that way. They are easily influenced by a very superficial view. They are apparently earning or getting more money, and they are disposed to spend it now, with little or no regard for the future. Merchants in some lines of goods—especially clothing, boots and shoes—testify that a large number of their customers are not looking for low-priced things, and that it is much easier to sell the more expensive goods than those that can be offered at lower figures. The housewife who has to buy daily the foodstuffs which are indispensable in the home appreciates the need of economy, but her son and daughter are not always as thoughtful and wise when they go out to purchase wearing apparel.

There is need of a check on the tendency to extravagance that is found in many quarters. Perhaps the overalls and old clothes movement will help to teach the needed lesson. In many places, perhaps, the movement may be very ephemeral, but even then it may be productive of good. In some of the larger American cities dealers in clothing have recognized the force of the movement, and have cut their prices sharply. That is to say, they have cut their own portion of the cost, their profit. That is the most that can be expected of them. Cheaper clothing of a good quality cannot be expected until there is a substantial reduction in the price of wool and in the wages of the employees in the woolen factories, and neither of these reductions is likely to come soon. If the people want cheap suits they will have to be content to have them made of inferior materials. But if the overall movement leads to nothing more than a cutting of the profits it will have justified itself.

The Labor Conference

THE problem of the relations between capital and labor is so large and important that there is a disposition on the part of the public to look sympathetically upon every movement designed, or alleged to be designed, to bring about a satisfactory settlement. Hence there is but little if any criticism of the numerous conferences that have been held in various places, to which numerous delegates representing varied interests have travelled at the public expense. It is an unusual day now, when there is not such a conference somewhere, or one proposed for which arrangements are being made. The expenditure for this kind of public service must amount to a very considerable sum. Nobody will begrudge the outlay if good results can be shown. But it is not easy to point out really effective

legislation that has been produced by these meetings.—Of course, many resolutions have been passed, declaring excellent principles and expressing pious opinions of what ought to be. But all the effective legislation—perhaps not as fully effective as one could wish it to be—was placed on the statute book years ago. The several conferences of recent years, unquestionably held with good aims, have been so unproductive of practical results that one's faith in these methods is severely tried.

The latest move of the kind is a conference now in progress at Ottawa, the proceedings of which are conducted with closed doors. If previous assemblies of the kind, held with open doors and in the full light of publicity, have accomplished little, it is safe to say that a conference from which the public and the press are excluded is not likely to be more successful. Publicity is sometimes embarrassing, and undoubtedly there are times when it should not be expected. But one may well doubt whether the ever troublesome labor problem can be made easier by secret meetings. There is a natural tendency on the part of the public, and the working classes particularly, to look with suspicion on the proceedings and conclusions of conferences of that kind.

A Quiet May Day

MAY DAY, the first day of the month, has for some years been chosen by the more radical elements of the working classes for demonstrations of their real or imaginary grievances. It was natural to expect, therefore, that this year, in a time of general unrest, May Day would prove to be a day of disturbance throughout the world. Happily this expectation was not realized. Taking all things into consideration, this year's May Day passed rather quietly. The day was very widely observed. In Canada and in many other countries meetings were held at which protests against some features of the existing order of things were registered. Some strikes that had been threatening came to a head. In a few cases there was disorder, none however in Canada.

Having regard to world-wide conditions, the orderly manner in which labor conducted itself on May Day encourages a hope that, difficult as are the labor problems of the time, they will find an amicable solution. If at a time like this, when unrest is so widespread, when the temptation to extreme action is so great, the labor organizations can be patient and considerate of the public weal, surely there is every reason to believe that, when the special troubles of this period have passed, and more normal conditions arise, capital and labor will find the way to a better understanding, which will make for peace and prosperity.