

Editorial

ALL THE TRAFFIC WILL BEAR

A SMALL serving of oatmeal porridge, four quarter-slices of toast, and a pot of tea! That is not a very heavy breakfast for a hungry man. If he eats at all he must eat that much. Yet the cost of this meal on the dining-car of a train is sixty-five cents, to which must be added ten cents for the porter, though why he should be rewarded for doing so simple a duty—for which he is already supposed to be paid—is not quite clear to the average intellect. Now this seventy-five cents is about the least price for which anyone can get a meal on the dining cars. The average cost runs to one dollar and a quarter or perhaps one dollar and a half. This makes eating in the diner prohibitive to most travellers, and those who are lucky enough to be able to go in for one or two meals a day invariably come out with the feeling that they have been robbed—even though the meal in itself is perfectly satisfactory.

Now, it is absurd to pay, even on a dining car, twenty-five cents for a cup of tea, and twenty-five cents for a helping of potatoes. Robbery is not by any means too harsh a term. The only justification is that the companies stand to make more by charging a high price to a few people, than by charging a much lower price to three times the number of people. Yet it is a grave question if the policy adopted is not from every point of view a mistaken one.

People resent injustice, and in the coming days, when the common people insist upon dictating how things will be arranged, it may be that the costly dining car will have to give place to something less pretentious, even if it is only a common lunch counter. And why not a lunch counter? Are travellers any better than men and women who stay at home?

Apart from this, is it not possible that the companies will find out before long that exorbitant prices do not pay? A few years ago a street railway in Chicago was losing money. It reduced the rate to ten or twelve tickets for a quarter, and grew rich. There is in this a good lesson not only for the dining cars, but for such organizations as the Winnipeg Street Railway. By high prices it has driven men to the use of motor-cars. By higher prices it is now going to make travelling prohibitive. If it were to reduce the price to ten tickets for a quarter, everybody would travel on the cars, and would use the cars even when going a few blocks. It is a question if the cheaper rate would not pay. And in deciding such matters people should look a few years ahead.

THE SPRING FASHIONS

THE cases cited are only typical. Among others that might be mentioned are changing fashions, price of meat and eggs, prices for shaving, cost of meats at restaurants, prices for theatre tickets, room rent at hotels, cost of surgical operations, lawyers' fees and plumbers' bills. Not a day passes that does not register some complaint with regard to these and kindred items.

The case of fashions is perhaps the most aggravating at the present time. A few people in the great centres, probably costumeers and manufacturers of dress goods acting in collusion, decide upon certain styles of dress from season to season. They go just as far as they can to make it impossible for people to use the same clothes two seasons in succession. They do it all, of course, in the name of taste, but every one knows that the real purpose is increased sale of materials. It is gratifying to note that women's clubs east and west are up in arms against the imposition, but it is doubtful if they will have courage to back up protest by definite action. Prevailing fashions in certain styles of dress are thoroughly immodest, and it is to the credit of Canadian women that they are entering a protest.

There is a financial side to this whole question, which is of no little importance. It may matter little in one way how the well-to-do expend their money, but the poorer people feel the pinch every day, and groan under the necessity of discarding old gowns for new. Censorship is now common enough. Perhaps it might with profit be extended to more than war news and picture shows.

LAWYERS' FEES

AN interesting case of what some consider to be gross overcharging is found in the bills of costs of lawyers who are doing service for governments. No one objects to paying a man of outstanding ability a remuneration many times greater than that of the average man. Men differ in quality and value just in the same way as ordinary commodities. The steel in a cart wheel is not as valuable as the steel in a watch spring. It is not one-thousandth part as valuable. When a lawyer of very ordinary ability suddenly finds himself entrusted with an investigation of a public question, there is no reason why he should immediately adopt the airs and charge the fees of a really good practitioner.

They tell of a man who entered a drug store asking that a prescription be made up. The druggist asked

seventy-five cents, and the man, who was deaf, handed him five cents. The druggist repeated, "Seventy-five cents," and the customer responded, "I paid you five cents," and so it continued for several minutes. At last the druggist gave up in despair, and consoled himself by saying, "Well, take it, I made three cents on it anyway." Now this may be a joke as far as drugs go, and it may hint at a real condition of things. In the grocery and meat lines, however, the prices charged are just about as absurd as prices could be. A man came to this city the other day with a carload of good cattle. The highest price he could receive was six and one-half cents. He reshipped his cattle home. What are the readers of this journal paying for their meat?

We say the war has tested us. So it has. Forget not that it is testing common honesty, and some are not able to stand the test. A thief is as unpatriotic as a man who speaks treason. Both are working against public welfare. The great art of life is the art of living together.

RAILWAYS AND RAILWAY RATES

NOW, the original application of the phrase, "All the traffic will bear," was to railroad rates. The fixing of these has always been a troublesome problem. There never was a time when the rates were satisfactory to everybody. Probably this time will never come. The events of the last few weeks, however, indicate that in future the tariffs will be arranged in a different way. When the people operate a road, they will see to it that prices are no greater and no less than they should be. They will always be greater than they should have been because of the unfortunate handling of the railway problems by our governments.

The taking over of the Grand Trunk Pacific by the government causes one to wonder how much less the railway systems of Canada would have cost the people if they had undertaken to build and operate them as public enterprises right from the beginning. There is no doubt that owing to the collusion between the big interests and influential members of Federal and Provincial Administrations, the general public have paid millions upon millions in cash and lands for which they have received no adequate returns. And the people say little, because the tax they pay is indirect, and an indirect tax is never felt in the same way as a direct tax. For this very reason direct taxation is to be encouraged. Were the system in force to-day, our governments wouldn't be so extravagant in some matters. A man who pays fifty dollars for a forty-dollar suit, does not feel the ten dollars which he pays as duty, but if he has to pay to the government the ten dollars out of his own pocket he will make pretty careful inquiry how it is being spent.

PATRIOTS ALL

A WRITER of distinction said that a dozen years ago one-eighth of the people in the United States owned seven-eighths of the wealth, and that less than one per cent. of the people owned more than 50 per cent. of the wealth. The figures to-day are even more impressive. It is probable that Canada can outdo the United States in this particular.

It is not jealousy nor ugliness which prompts one to protest against this. The great wrong in the system is that it undermines true patriotism. A man ceases to have love for a country when he feels that it is not his country, and it does not seem to be his country if he has not a stake in it, in the form of lands or home or business or national bonds.

The movements that are in operation to-day to increase the number of property owners and decrease the number of tenants, to establish co-operative industrial establishments of all kinds, to encourage the purchase of small homes in cities and towns, are all to be welcomed. If anything in our financial and industrial methods prevents the movement in this direction it will be most unfortunate. True democracy has as its foundation the idea of common possession. The only autocrats are not the crowned head, and indeed these are no longer to be feared. The real danger is in autocrats of industry, finance, religion and politics.

THE PRICE OF COAL

THERE was one little speech at Calgary that has passed almost unnoticed. One of the delegates, so it is said, gave what is claimed to be an authoritative statement that the cost of coal at the mouth of the pit in Alberta is \$2.35, and the cost to the consumer in Winnipeg is \$12. If these facts are true is it any wonder that there is rebellion? If they are true could there be any language too severe to apply to the men who are res-

ponsible for the spread in price—the owners, the railway companies and the coal companies? But if the report is not true, is there any punishment too severe for a man who would give it out as truth? Is it not the duty of the government of Canada to make known the facts? There is nothing that will clear up wrong like a plain statement of facts. It is hardly necessary to say that the man to investigate conditions and make a statement of facts is not a dependent upon the coal companies nor the railroads. We have had too many findings by men who had every reason for expressing biased opinions.

ARRANGING FOR THE FUTURE

THE attention that is being given these days to the education of children is a hopeful sign. Any nation is wise that in shaping its policies considers the future. It is possible that the war has taught us how valuable the school may be when properly organized and supported. It was the schools that built up wrong ideals in the German mind, and produced the decisions that ended a war. So, too, it can be the schools of Canada which will promote right ideals, and incline the people to those decisions that make for happiness and permanent peace.

But if the schools are to do this they must be reconstructed. They must get a new type of teacher, a new course of instruction, and a new motive. There is no permanency in the service to-day. No matter how capable teachers may be they cannot reach the maximum of service in less than three years. We are informed that most of them do not teach this long. The studies in school are in some cases shot through with mediaevalism. The arithmetics, grammars and histories should be rewritten, and there should be intelligent teaching of composition and civil duty, while the whole activities of the school should be related more closely to the activities of daily life.

The changes cannot be effected without re-organization and without money. The money now spent will keep the present style of schools going, but what is wanted is a new type, as foreshadowed in the consolidated schools which are springing up all through the West.

Recent happenings, such as the pronouncements of the Calgary convention, and the discussions on the tariff at Ottawa, show the necessity of conference at joint meetings of all interested parties. No sane body of workmen if meeting with representatives of the employers, the consumers and the State, could possibly have reached such decisions as were embodied in the Calgary resolutions, unless indeed, the misinterpretation by the press. No one can imagine that a tariff decision, accepted even as a temporary solution, could have been reached, unless in a caucus both sides met to match arguments.

The world has grown tired of this continual strife between capital and labor. Unless it ceases our country is doomed. The only way to get along is to work together, each party respecting the rights and the sacrifices of the other. This "skin game" has had its day. "Heartless capitalism" may have been bad, but Canada prefers even that to red-handed Bolshevism. But Canada should have neither. The general public, and particularly the purchasing public, are interested in every enterprise in the country, and must more and more be consulted in all matters of dispute. This is another way of saying that antagonism should give way to friendly co-operation, and that this co-operation can best be secured through conference not only of employers and workers, but of the general public and the body of consumers as well. My business is in a sense every man's business, and every man's business is mine. That is the principle of national reconstruction.

THE INCOME TAX

ON this account, an income tax is not altogether a bad thing, even if the principle may not be accepted as perfectly sound in all cases. There is no problem more difficult of solution than that of taxation. If one man puts his capital into real estate, where it lies dormant, yet growing quietly as the years go by, and another man puts his capital in stocks or bonds which yield him annually a certain income, why should one be taxed and the other exempt? A good system of taxation must run every dollar to earth and tax it as may be necessary. It is not an easy thing to trace every dollar in this way, because there are so many ways of hiding wealth. And then it is not definitely settled whether people should be taxed according to their ability to pay, or according to the benefits received from the state or community.