

CONVENTION OF WESTERN RETAIL LUMBERMEN.

The eighth annual convention of the Western Retail Lumbermen's Association was held in Winnipeg on February 8th, at which there was a large and representative attendance of both active and honorary members. The president, Mr. James B. Mathers, of Glenboro, was absent on a trip to British Columbia, therefore the chair was taken by the vice-president, Mr. Henry Byrnes, of Winnipeg. After the reading and adoption of the minutes of the last meeting, the president's address was read, as follows:

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE WESTERN RETAIL LUMBERMEN'S ASSOCIATION:

GENTLEMEN:—It affords me much pleasure to welcome so many members to this our eighth annual meeting. I am pleased to congratulate you upon the successful and prosperous year just closed in all branches of business, and specially in the lumber trade. Our province and adjoining territory has been blessed with a bountiful harvest, which has enabled the public in general to settle their liabilities as promptly as usual, thus placing trade on a firm and substantial basis. There appears to be a favorable prospect for a good immigration to our land next season, which will certainly have a beneficial influence on the lumber trade.

Your directors, as requested at the last annual meeting, looked into the matter of fire insurance, also a telegraphic code. Your secretary communicated with the secretary of the Northwestern Lumbermen's Association of Minneapolis, and from information received your directors deemed it not advisable to attempt forming a fire insurance company at the present time, as our membership is not large enough to ensure its success, and considerable expense would be incurred in procuring a charter, etc.

Two telegraphic codes were purchased, and after looking into the matter we came to the conclusion that they would be seldom used, and would, in all probability, lead to confusion and mistakes, as they are complicated, there being so many different grades, sizes and length of lumber, and few manufacturers use the same terms.

We wish to express our thanks to the Rat Portage Lumber Co. and other honorary members who so kindly entertained us last summer, by a lumber excursion through the pictures of Lake of the Woods and up Rainy river to Fort Francis, which was one of the most enjoyable excursions on record, and was duly appreciated by all who were able to attend. Our thanks are also due the officials of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, who so generously granted free transportation to all members attending.

We regret very much the removal, by death, of three of our esteemed brother members, Mr. Gibbard, of Wapella, Mr. Wyatt, of Virden, and Mr. Nichol, of Boissevain, during the past year.

At our last annual meeting our membership stood at 164; during the year four honorary and 45 active members were accepted by your directors and secretary, 21 have withdrawn or sold out to others who belong now in their stead, leaving our membership at the present time 28 larger than last year. This is, indeed, gratifying, as our increase for 1897 was only four over the year previous. During the year a great many applications were refused, as they were from points where there are sufficient yards to supply the trade, and in fact in many cases one member less at these points would be an improvement instead of one extra. If all these applicants were able to get stock the competition would be so great and the business of each so much less, that it would have a very depressing influence on the financial ability of a great many, which would soon result in failure, and our honorary members would eventually have to shoulder a large portion of the losses.

Before closing, I wish to thank my fellow officers for their very able assistance and faithful work performed during the past year. All matters brought before them received their most careful attention and consideration.

We are glad to see so many members present at this meeting. A pleasant and profitable feature of this convention is the bringing together of members, active and honorary, renewing old acquaintances and forming new ones, and leading to free and full discussion on all matters relating to the trade.

Many subjects, no doubt, will come up at this meeting, which I trust will receive your most careful consideration. Yours truly,

JAS. B. MATHERS, President.

Mr. Byrnes added to the address a few words concerning the status of the trade. He said that the past year had been an exceedingly prosperous one; and the prospects for the coming year were excellent.

Mr. John Dick, secretary-treasurer, presented the financial statement, which showed total receipts of \$2,618, of which \$784 was carried forward from the previous year, the remainder being made up of fees and dues collected during the year. The disbursements were \$1,889, leaving a balance of \$729 to the credit of the Association.

After reports of regular committees, the election of officers was proceeded with, the result being as follows:

President H. Byrnes, Winnipeg.

Vice-president—R. H. O'Hara, Brandon.

Directors—A. M. Stewart, of Morden; A. J. Hughes, of Souris; Wm. Armstrong, of Portage la Prairie; G. M. Miller, of Virden; T. A. Cuddy, of Minnedosa; D. Sprague, of Winnipeg.

An animated discussion was started by Mr. D. E. Sprague, of Winnipeg, who declared that the rules of the Association were not being adhered to by some of the members, and expressed the opinion that if this condition of things continued the Association might as well be dissolved. The specific charge was that over thirty million feet of lumber had been purchased from manufact-



MR. HENRY BYRNES,
President elect Western Retail Lumbermen's Association

urers in the United States. This was in controversy of the by-laws; clause 3 stating that honorary members are not to sell stock to any men not active members of the Association, while clause 32 says that active members are to buy from honorary members only. It was claimed that the former clause was strictly carried out, while the latter was not. Mr. D. C. Cameron, of the Rat Portage Lumber Company, and Mr. C. M. Beacher, of the British Columbia Mills, Timber and Trading Company, said that if the retailers did not refrain in the future from breaking the by-laws of the Association they would withdraw from honorary membership. They pointed out that the Canadian manufacturers were able to supply the demand, and there was no reason for buying American lumber. A suggestion was made by one of the members that some changes be made in the by-laws to make them more workable.

Several retail dealers spoke in defence of their position. All confessed to have purchased American lumber, some giving as their reason that they must have some dry lumber, and that they could not get it from the Canadian manufacturers. The chief reason for buying American lumber seemed to be that it was cheaper than the Canadian production, and the members were compelled to buy it in self protection against

competition from points on the Northern Pacific branch lines where American lumber was handled almost exclusively. The members were almost unanimous in agreeing that as things were it was impossible to live up to the rules of the Association.

Mr. Cameron said that the honorary members had agreed, at a meeting some time ago, on a tariff of prices. If it were necessary to revise this price list, they were prepared to do so, but so long as they had a published price list, any American competitor could come in and offer lumber at fifty cents or one dollar a thousand cheaper.

Mr. Beecher said that his company were willing to meet the competition from the south by adjusting prices, but the by-laws would have to be carried out by the active members. The discussion continued for several hours without practical results, and finally it was agreed that the directors of the Association should meet the honorary members the following morning and endeavor to come to some arrangement.

On the following evening the meeting was resumed to hear the report of the directors as to the result of their conference with the honorary members. The chairman announced that nothing definite had been done except that an agreement was reached that the honorary and active members would support each other in carrying out the objects of the Association. It was arranged that the directors and honorary members should hold a meeting at an early date to arrange a new price list. When this is done, the result will be made known to all the active members, and the revised price list will be sent to them.

Further discussion on the subject was opened by Mr. T. G. Robinson, of Winnipeg, who maintained that the only way to solve the difficulty was for the honorary members to control the supply of all kinds of lumber. He argued that at competitive points such as Winnipeg it was impossible to keep out a certain amount of American lumber. He confessed to selling one million feet of American lumber for one building last year. This he was able to supply at a less cost than he could have supplied Canadian lumber.

Mr. Cameron contended that in reality the American lumber was no cheaper than the Canadian, as in the case of the former the thicknesses were less than in the latter. He asserted that lumber that was sold as two inch stuff was cut in United States about an inch and three-quarters, and therefore Canadian lumber cut the full two inches, at \$16 a thousand, was just as cheap as American lumber cut an inch and three-quarters, at \$14 a thousand. He said that if the Canadian retailers were satisfied with 1 1/4 inch lumber for 2 inch, they were prepared to cut it that way and give them the proportionate reduction in price, but he had found that the retailers always demanded the full thickness. The meeting adjourned to attend the Hoo-Hoo banquet.

In the evening the lumbermen attended a grand Hoo-Hoo initiation and banquet. The following lumbermen were initiated into the mysteries of the Hoo-Hoo order: J. S. Lockhead, Deloraine; W. A. Morkill, Dominion City; W. Armstrong, Portage la Prairie; E. E. Greenshaw, Shoal Lake; J. L. Campbell, Melita; J. E. Campbell, Carman; W. R. Stevens, Cypress River; W. Robinson, Rat Portage; A. J. Hughes, Souris; S. Caswell, Rathwell; C. W. Plummer, Boissevain; J. W. McCutcheon, Glenboro; W. Cranston, Clearwater.

The banquet was held in Rose's dining parlors, Livingstone block, and was attended by a large number of representative lumbermen from all parts of the province. The dining hall was prettily decorated, and an elaborate menu had been provided. The chair was occupied by vice-gent J. C. Graham. A number of able speeches, interspersed with witticisms, entertained the assembly until after midnight, when the jolly lumbermen and their friends dispersed.