

An Open Letter to Workingmen.

BY ONE OF THEMSELVES.

THE Canadian electorate are about to be asked to say by their votes, whether what is known as the National Policy is to be continued or abandoned—whether the Dominion is to retain the present system of protection to native industry, strengthening it where experience has shown it to be weak, and perfecting it where it has been found to be imperfect; or whether abandoning this policy we shall approximate toward what is, by a misapplication of terms, called Free Trade. In deciding this momentous question, no class of the people will have a more potent voice, as none have a deeper interest, than the artisans and mechanics—the skilled labourers of Canada.

It is a duty, then, which they owe at once to their country and to themselves and their families, to consider well what will be the effect of their votes in the coming elections. To allow mere considerations of party triumph or defeat to influence their action at the polls, would be a paltering with the trust of the franchise, almost amounting to treason to their country's best interests. No matter what partizans and partizan journals may say in their eagerness to get or retain power, the affairs of the country, so far as the administrative acts of the Government are concerned, will be in the future, as they have been in the past, conducted about equally well by either of the political parties. The one side will continue to make and the other to deny charges of corruption and extravagance. But the impartial student of the history of political parties in Canada must arrive at the conclusion that whatever of truth there may have been in such charges when made by and against both the parties in their turn, there does not exist on either side such an excess of vice or surplussage of virtue as would of itself furnish adequate cause for preferring one to the other.

The elector who would be honest with himself and true to his country, will not allow himself to be led by the storm of crimination and recrimination; of charges and countercharges; of denials and reiterations, away from the calm, dispassionate and thoughtful consideration of the policies of the two parties who are asking his support. A mistake in the selection of men can be remedied, and at the worst is transient in its effects; an error in the choice of a policy may mar the whole future of a country, and may turn what would have been happiness, prosperity and national greatness into wretchedness, industrial disaster and national decay.

So long as men retain the right to think freely there will exist differences of opinion, and these differences may and do divide men into hostile, or at any rate opposing camps of thought. If the matter in dispute concerns the Government or politics of the country, these camps naturally become political parties. Indeed, it may be said that only in this way can honest political parties be formed, for a body of politicians banded together for any object less than the advancement of a principle, can hardly be more than a political banditti.