

## OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"Does a tariff on the products of labor protect labor itself, is a question the workingmen of Canada will have to answer correctly within the next few weeks," said Brown. "Now, does it protect labor?"

"Certainly not," said Phil. "The prosperity of the laborer depends, first: upon the amount of money he receives in exchange for his labor, and second: upon the purchasing power of that money. If his wages were regulated by the price of the products of labor then something might be said in defence of this policy of protection, but they are not. His wages are regulated by the law of supply and demand, and whenever the supply of labor is greater than the demand, wages will go down in spite of all the tariffs you may enact; and whenever the demand is greater than the supply, wages must of necessity rise, no matter what the price of the products may be; the tariff has nothing whatever to do with it excepting in so far that it reduces the purchasing power of what little you do earn in exactly the same ratio as the amount of duty collected on the articles you consume. A duty on the products of labor enables those who manufacture them to compel the consumer to pay thirty or thirty-five per cent more than what they are worth, or for which they could be imported, while at the same time he takes every advantage of the overcrowded labor market to reduce your wages. This explains in part how a few are enabled in a comparatively short time to amass millions, while the great majority of the people can hardly keep the wolf from the door."

"But," said Sinnett, "the protective policy has induced capital to embark in enterprises of all kinds, and by doing so it has employed labor and kept the money in the country which otherwise would have been paid for foreign cheap goods." "But who has this money? Have you got it? And if you haven't what good is it to you?" said Sharkey. "The importation of foreign cheap goods has never and will never do you any harm, but the importation of foreign cheap labor cannot help but reduce your wages. If the protectionists wanted to protect the interests of the Canadian workingmen they would have placed such a high tax on every individual worker landing on our shores as would practically make it impossible for him to come; such action would make labor scarce in Canada and wages would rise; the demand for labor would soon exceed the supply, and the laborer would become more independent, but that is exactly what the protectionists don't want. They don't want the laborer to be independent, they want him to live from hand to mouth, so that he may be more submissive and helpless, and for this reason they placed a tariff of thirty-five cents on every dollar's worth of goods he consumes, and then by assisted passages and money grants, by misrepresentation and windy promises made by their authorized agents, induced foreign cheap labor to come here and compete in an already overcrowded labor market in order to reduce wages. The manufacturer shares the benefits of protection with his employees in the same way as the sailor shared the pudding with the soldier: he cut it in halves and took the ends, leaving the soldier the rest. It's a game of 'heads I win and tails you lose.'"

"Anyway," said Sinnett, "the question isn't free trade or protection, but restricted or unrestricted reciprocity with the States."

"The question is nothing of the kind," said Brown, "it is plain and simple, free trade or protection. Unrestricted reciprocity with the States two years from now will mean free

trade with all the world. No man who can read the signs of the times will deny that protection is deadlier than a door nail in the States; it is only a question of time, and a short time at that, when free traders will control national affairs in Washington; and if the workingmen of Canada do their duty on the 5th March free traders will control our national affairs at Ottawa after that date. The whole question in a nutshell is this: If Canadian workingmen are willing to take sixty-five cents for every dollar they earn, then they will vote for Sir John and his policy; if, on the other hand, they believe in receiving a hundred cents for their dollar, then they will support the Liberal candidates, no matter by whom they are opposed. Let them place principle before men.

BILL BLADES.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## RECIPROCITY AND WAGES.

To the Editor of THE ECHO:

SIR,—In its edition of to-night, in a lengthy article worded "Workingmen and Reciprocity," the Witness ridicules the idea that Unrestricted Reciprocity will in any way lessen the wages of the workingman. It asserts that as a result of the policy higher wages would move in Canada—also that living would cost more. So that it amounts to the same thing. There is not much use in earning more if you are compelled to spend more. But the object of my letter was to ask this question: How does the Witness reconcile its present statement in re high wages with the fact that during the Mackenzie Administration that paper cut down the price of its own employees, at first 20 per cent, and then 10 per cent, besides, man and boy alike? If that is the way free trade with the U. S. affects us—if that is raising our wages—the sooner the free trade cry is abolished the better. Perhaps, however, the Witness would like another opportunity to lessen their wages sheet at the expense of their intelligent, though much abused, staff of compositors.

Yours truly,

SINGLE PRICE TABLE.

Montreal, February 17, 1891.

## PILING IT ON THE LABOR HORSE.

There is no fad however ridiculous, no humbug however apparent or pretentious, and no fraud however stupendous, that has not at some time or other attempted to attach itself to the labor engine, so that it might be pulled into port by the moral force of that movement. Long-haired men and short-haired women, professional foreigners and barrel-house politicians, silver schemes and green-back schemers, pension sharks and land sharks, all have at times undertaken to use the labor movement in the interest of their nefarious schemes of plunder.

While standing in the rotunda of the capitol at Washington last August the writer was approached by a professional lobbyist and introduced to an individual whose card bore the seducing announcement "Chairman of the Committee on Eight-hour Claims." He claimed to be, and no doubt was, the master workman of a political knight of labor assembly in Washington. His special mission was to look after and advance the interests of a bill then pending in the House, but which was this week practically rejected by the Senate, which provided for the adjustment of wages under the national eight-hour law of 1868. There was no question as to the equity of the proposition. These claims should certainly be paid to the men who did the work, "but," we asked the chairman of the committee on eight-hour claims, "what is the real inspiring motive of those who are behind this thing? Is it to get money for the men who did the work or for some one else?" "Oh, of course," he replied, "there are some expenses that will have to be provided for out of what is procured from the Government, and then we have to make a fair allowance for the risk in time and money of those gentlemen who have contributed both to assist us." It finally developed that a large number of the claims, aggregating several million dollars, had already been assigned to the gentlemen who contributed time and money to procure the passage of the bill, and if the real claimants ever receive anything, if the bill should pass, it would not exceed twenty-five or perhaps fifty per cent; the balance goes to the sand baggers.

Now this is what honest labor objects to, and yet it has apparently not the power to free itself from the clutches of these sharks. The Government owes the workmen these claims, and they ought to be paid, but when provision is made to do this it should be understood and provided for that not one cent shall go to the sharks and sand baggers.—The Rights of Labor.

## WOES OF THE WORKING PEOPLE.

Willing Hands and Empty Stomachs in the Wealthiest City in America.

The New York World has made a careful survey of the condition of the laboring classes at the metropolis, and it states that there are no less than 160,000 people in that city crying for work. The number of the unemployed is larger than ever before in the history of the city. There are fully 100,000 mechanics and artisans out of work, and 50,000 more people with no trade and no occupation. Add to these about 10,000 people composing the usual driftwood of society and the total is large enough to alarm the most conservative and distress the most hard-hearted. The building trades' section of the Central Labor Union numbers from 80,000 to 90,000. Of these about 45,000 are out of work. The class of men who suffer the most are the laborers, numbering 15,000, their wages being so small that they can not pay up money for seasons of idleness.

There are thousands of workers in the clothing trades without employment, as the holiday rush has ended, and the spring trade has not yet taken any decided shape. Great hordes of men and women are compelled to remain in idleness. Longshoremen have never had as prosperous times in this city as the period during the war. Contrasted with the condition of these sturdy workers to-day that by-gone time of plenty seems like a vision of good things which have passed away in a mist. The reality to-day is a saddening one. More than 10,000 are to be found at any hour lounging along the river fronts eagerly looking for something to do. The number of men seeking employment along the river front has increased far in excess of the proportionate increase of the commerce of the city until to-day there are fifty men ready to fill one man's place. The result has been the reduction of wages to a point far below what was paid seven or eight years ago. The protective unions which the men had built up to save themselves from the tyranny or close-fistedness of employers have been broken up, and the longshoremen of the present are without any means at hand to enable them to improve their condition or at all advance their interests from the unenviable plight in which they are placed.

Of the purely unskilled laboring element in the city, more than a third find themselves without work when winter sets in. When in this predicament they seek relief, some of them from friends, others in the streets, and many of them even go so far as appear before the justices in the police courts.

There are always at least 3,000 idle men in and around the depots of the street railway companies. These men are known as extras, and act as substitutes for drivers, conductors or stablemen who may be off duty for the time being. The policy of the management of these roads seems to be to hire as many men as they can get, and fill them with the delusive hope that they will get enough of work to keep body and soul together at least. They must attend at the depot every morning and answer to their names, or if they absent themselves, they "go down" to the bottom of the lists that are kept by each company. The worst feature of the condition of such employees as the street car men and unskilled laborers is that they do not foster benevolent or industrial organizations which might tend to help them in their hours of want or trial.

Out of 6,000 compositors in the city, there are 5,000 strongly organized in Typographical Union No. 6. Of the total, there are 500 men out of work at present. There are 150 pressmen and feeders seeking employment, and in the other branches of the printing trade there are 500 men without anything to do. Among the printers there are over a thousand men who depend largely on their chances as "substitutes." These men may get two or three days' work a week, or they may not get a day. Practically speaking, the "sub" has to take his chances just as he has to take the weather—whether he likes it or not.

There are 500 telegraph operators without situations. These men and women are finding a new condition of affairs staring them in the face as the world grows older. Schools of telegraphy have multiplied to such an extent that "graduates" are turned out in thousands every year to compete with men and women who have practically grown with "the key" in their hands.

In the tobacco workers' trades there is also a very decided dullness. Of the 6,500 cigar-makers in the city over 1,200 are now idle. Cigarette-makers: 1,000 of them are also out of employment. Salesmen to the number of 1,000 are vainly looking for work. About 500 shipping clerks experienced a like condition of affairs. Porters, packers, and book-keepers to away up in thousands can be found by merely asking for them.

It is a pregnant and striking fact that American slavery was never afraid of American religion.

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## To Grand Trunk Men.

Special Prices for Week Commencing 15th Feb.

WE ARE GLAD TO TELL YOU THAT

I. A. Beauvais' Old Stand,  
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is now reopened, and we have taken this opportunity to make tremendous reductions on all our goods, and it is the time for you to pay us a visit, so as to save money.

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500 MEN'S OVERCOATS, only \$3, worth \$5.50.  
600 BOYS' OVERCOATS, only \$1.75, worth \$3.  
1,500 doz. WHITE LINEN COLLARS, only 5c, worth 15c.  
200 doz. COLORED SHIRTS, only 45c, worth 75c.  
200 doz. WHITE SHIRTS, only 35c, worth 60c.  
100 doz. SHIRTS AND DRAWERS, only 45c a suit, worth 75c.  
50 doz. WOOL GLOVES, only 15c, worth 25c.

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