

the wages that they are receiving at present. The manufacturers have been forced to reduce their wages. I know also that others have reluctantly been forced into that position, for it is with reluctance that a man—if he possesses the feeling that I believe the vast majority of that class possess—I say it is with reluctance that manufacturers will discharge their employees, especially during the dull winter months. But it was forced upon them. And we have the testimony of men who have written letters to their employers and signed them—letters in which they stated that they would almost sooner starve than strike, but in which they asked their employers to take into consideration their circumstances, to consider for a moment the amount of wages they were receiving and to ask themselves how it was possible that on those wages they could support and educate their families, and keep the sheriff away from the door. This was the state of things when Parliament assembled; but limited as my ability is accurately, from actual contact with the outside business public, to ascertain what is transpiring in that direction, I am forced unwillingly to the conclusion that, instead of the position improving, it is rather worse; and though I am not one of those who take a too gloomy view of the affairs of this country, for I believe the people of Canada are a people full of energy, yet from my knowledge of the stocks of many manufactured articles in this country, I am able, as a business man, to say that there is a period before us during which we may not expect to have that prosperity which was upon us for two or three years past. I think my view is borne out by this fact, that the prosperity we enjoyed during the two or three previous years was a prosperity, not natural to the years in which we enjoyed it, but that during those two or three years, in addition to the prosperity that was on the country, a natural prosperity, resulting from many varying causes, notably among which was the increase of wealth brought into the country from the sale of lumber, animals and their products, and agricultural produce—there was a prosperity, if by great trading prosperity may be defined, in a measure due to the fact that we discounted a year or two that were to follow; in other words, the goods which should have been manufactured in 1884 and 1885, and perhaps some of the goods which ought to have been manufactured in 1886, were, by the stimulus of the highly protective Tariff, manufactured during the three years of prosperity. It thus seems inevitable that for a year or two, at all events—I trust it may not be longer—we cannot expect to have anything like the prosperity we enjoyed during those two or three years; I hope my forecast may not be perfectly correct, and that it may turn out that we have not really discounted the prosperity which should occur during this and future years in the last three years which have gone by. But I have to bring before the House the views of the wage-earners of this country, as represented by their Trade and Labour Council in Toronto. Not many days ago petitions were presented to this House—petitions yards in length, and covered with the signatures of the men who, with bared arms, work for their daily bread in the different trades and industries—in which they set forth that there is no longer in this country room for any more labourers than we have in it, and that there are mechanics and artisans at the present time unable to obtain employment, and that assisted passages for mechanics and ordinary labourers should altogether cease from this time forth. I have before me a Report of their Legislative Committee on 7th March, from which I desire to read an extract to the House. And the House will agree with me that if it was a right and proper thing that the manufacturing industries of this country, if the interests of comparatively few men engaged in manufacturing were of sufficient importance to warrant the Finance Minister in bringing their case before Parliament and asking for special

Mr. PATERSON (Brant).

legislation, in order that they might be favoured and encouraged, then I hold that hon. members will admit it is a right and proper thing that I should bring before the House the claims of a class who outnumber the other class perhaps a hundred to one, when they ask this House not to give them any special favour, not to enact legislation directly for their benefit, but that from this time forward, under the present depressed circumstances, the Government will not take the wages paid by way of taxes into the Dominion Treasury, contributed by those wage-earners, for the purpose of paying the passages of men from foreign countries to come here and compete with them, and cut down the price of their labour. The Legislative Committee of the Trades and Labour Council said:

"Your Committee are pleased to find that the discussions in both the Dominion Parliament and the Provincial Legislature, on the immigration question, its abuses, and its evils, consequent upon the persistent efforts of your body in keeping the subject before the public, have, in a pointed manner, drawn attention to the very unreliable manner in which immigration statistics are secured by the Dominion Government. To this same looseness in enforcing the printed instructions and regulations of the Government on the part of agents abroad, is due in a great measure the fact that the classes required, if required at all, do not find their way to Canada. In support of this contention it is only necessary to call attention to the fact that, during the month of February just passed, there arrived in Toronto 148 immigrants, of whom fifty-four were mechanics and thirty-six were clerks, leaving only fifty-eight under the head of "farm labourers." The system which encourages and abets immigration to Canada in midwinter, of the two first-mentioned classes, and under the present depressing outlook, is simply infamous.

"Your Committee feel that it cannot be too often repeated that there are more mechanics and labourers in Canada at the present time than can find employment, altogether irrespective of what wage they may be willing to work for, and as a consequence, regret that the Dominion Government still, and in face of this undeniable fact, evinces a disposition to further flood our labour market, as shown by the increased sum asked to be voted by Parliament for immigration purposes during the now opening season."

That is the report of the Legislative Committee of the Trades and Labour Council of Toronto, which, I take it, fairly represents the sentiments of the wage-earners. I may add that the petitions presented were not petitions from that body alone, but from other cities of the Dominion. At a meeting held on the 22nd March, the Legislative Committee made another report, with which I will trouble the House. The report says:

"Your Committee are glad to notice, through the press, that the Dominion Government has drawn the attention of the Trade Immigration Committee to the undesirableness of many of those sent to Canada under or by direction of said Committee, and would express the hope that this is but the first of a series of steps towards meeting the views so often and so forcibly, as well as truthfully, brought under the notice of the Government by your body, regarding immigration by assisted passage, and as paupers.

"Your Committee are buoyed in this hope, the more particularly as the reports published during the past two weeks of the numbers of poor people fed and provided with clothing, fuel, &c., by the various charitable and benevolent organizations, are of themselves the very best evidence that the ground long since taken by your body in asserting that our labour market is more than over stocked with surplus labourers, was strictly correct. Your attention, as well as that of the public, is, in a particular manner, called to the following, credited in the city press to Mr. Pell, one of the relieving officers of the St. George's Society. He stated, 'that among the applicants were many newly-arrived immigrants, who came out on 'assisted passages' from the Dominion Government, and were entirely without capital. Most of the new arrivals are ordinary labourers, mechanics and clerks. None seem to have been brought up to agricultural pursuits.' Mr. Pell concludes by hoping that he 'may never again have to witness so much distress in the city.' And with the same end in view, your Committee have been keeping the matter so persistently before the Government, your body, and the public generally."

I cannot read all the extracts. I hope it will all be allowed to be printed—but they say that they feel buoyed up in their hope, by the fact that one of the active agents of a reliable society, whom the press generally agrees in saying is Mr. Pell, hopes he may never be called upon again to witness such an amount of distress as existed in that city at the present time, among newly-arrived immigrants. Now, having read these extracts, having spoken of matters which, I suppose, are more or less within the knowledge of gentlemen present, I have no hesitancy in saying that there is not in Canada, at the present time, room for any more mecha-