

REFLECTIONS

DIRECTORS who do not direct must make room for those who will direct. Many of our financial and commercial institutions in which the general public are asked to place their confidence—and their money—have Boards of Directors whose names are dazzling by reason of their titles and public positions. It is their ability to make a dazzle that put them on the board and keeps them there,—and most of them are not so stupid that they do not know it. They draw their salaries as honorary presidents, presidents, vice-presidents and directors, and are satisfied. Many of them are honourable men, men who would be shocked at the idea of wilfully misdirecting, but fail to realize the crime of not directing. They are playing with loaded weapons and when the discharge takes place, will give the fool's excuse,—“Didn't know it was loaded.” The law may punish such, but the investor has in his hands another remedy. Before investing his money, let him study the men who are to be, or who ought to be, responsible for its safety and select only those institutions that are presided over by active and successful men of business and affairs. Under these conditions, titles and political offices will soon cease to be prime requirements for directors of commercial and financial institutions.

THE Lethbridge Strike attracts attention not only to the cool-headedness of Mr. King, the Deputy Minister of Labour, and to the success which has attended other negotiations in which he has engaged, but also to the wider question of the relation of the GOVERNMENT AND STRIKES consuming public to the parties in dispute. The former tolerant acquiescence of belief on the part of the public in the benefits of labour unionism has, within the last ten years, changed to a much more critical attitude. The wider ramifications of unionism have come to affect the consumer in many new ways. But it is when the disputes between labour and capital affect questions of the necessities of life—breadstuffs, fuel, etc.—that the consumer becomes impatient and tends to exclaim “a plague of both your houses.” Conscious of his own impotence and impressed by his own necessities, he looks more and more to the government. As a result of this there has, on the North American continent generally, been a great growth of unconscious Socialism within the past five years. Without any ultimate theory of government functions in mind increasing welcome has been given to government intervention in matters of industrial policy. Part of this is undoubtedly due to the fact that, in many of the engagements of modern industrial warfare, the consumer really is between the upper and nether mill stone. When the anthracite coal strike was on in the United States, Mr. Mitchell, the leader of the strike, suggested that the increase of wages demanded could easily be added to the price of coal. The government has been called upon to protect the individual; what was the socialism of yesterday is the individualism of to-day. It is to be expected that the scope of such intervention will increase. With the massing of capital in modern industry some of the old fetiches are relegated to the museum. The alternative is no longer between private ownership and government ownership; the choice now lies between governmental regulation and government ownership. For

this task of regulation a government is not ideally fitted but it is the only agency available. If, then, there is to be a policy which will not do more harm than good there must, at every step, be a careful scrutiny of every such extension of power; not a mere unthinking acquiescence in the apparent dictates of an opportunism intended to placate popular importunity.

THE farmer of the Canadian West is found out, and he has no objection to having been detected. Anywhere east of Port Arthur, at any time in the last ten years, it was allowable for a campaigner to arise on the stump and announce that the Western AND THE wheat grower wanted nothing but WESTERN Free Trade. But even on the out-FARMER skirts of the West, say at Winnipeg, it has been known that the producers of Number One hard are far from being a solid body of “no tariff” men. During political contests there will be found all through the West as much straight Protection advocacy as was ever served out to an Ontario or Quebec audience. The lately-arrived American farmers, in particular, number many Protectionists among them. Many of them have been brought up in a Protectionist school. The Iowa men and the newcomers from Nebraska hail from States which are about evenly divided politically. It must be remembered that even when William J. Bryan was a candidate for the Presidency, Nebraska, his home State, went Republican and High Tariff.

These Americans have brought their economic beliefs with them. The farmers from Eastern Canada vote largely as they did “back home.” The English usually follow the party names they knew in the Old Country. And the remainder—the Galicians, the Ruthenians and all the rest of the polyglot European population—are amenable to arguments, sometimes oral; sometimes more tangible. They are striving to become good Canadians and to learn our ways, but they do not find political science on the curriculum.

The truth is that in the West the tariff is not an issue, nor is there any prospect of the local leaders of either party choosing to make it an issue. Like other men in other parts of Canada, the Western wheat raisers are more concerned with that which obviously and intimately concerns their prosperity. They talk of their two great wants—more railways and more farm hands. In Manitoba, the Roblin Government faces only eight opponents out of a House of forty, because the farmers are convinced that it made a compact with one of the great railway systems whereby freight rates were reduced. This line's competitors, they argue, had to cut rates to meet the reduction and secure their share of the business. Here the Manitoba farmer sees an immediate benefit, and he holds that a difference of a few points in a customs tariff is of infinitely less importance to him than is certainty of being able, through railway building and competition, to market his wheat at several cents more a bushel than he would receive were his distance from a shipping-point great and the freight rates to tidewater exorbitant.

It is not to be expected that the straight Free Trade West myth will be exploded this year or next year. It will furnish the groundwork of many a speech in Eastern Canada before it receives its quietus. But a myth it is, and a myth it always has been, as a glance