

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ONTARIO LUMBERMEN'S ASSOCIATION.

THE annual meeting of the Lumbermen's Association of Ontario was held in the council chamber of the Board of Trade building, Toronto, on Wednesday, February 21st, at which there was a fair attendance of members. The chair was occupied by the president, Mr. John Bertram, of Toronto. The minutes of the last annual meet-



MR. JOHN WALDIE,
President Lumbermen's Association of Ontario.

ing, as well as the financial report, were read by the secretary and, on motion of Mr. James Scott, confirmed.

The next order of business was the reading of correspondence. The secretary read communications from the following: From Mr. A. E. Kemp, president of the Toronto Board of Trade, suggesting the formation of a Lumber Section; from the British Columbia Lumber and Shingle Manufacturers' Association, stating that they would be represented at the meeting of the Ontario Association by Mr. F. D. Gordon; from Sir Wilfred Laurier, advising the Association that no decision had as yet been reached regarding the imposition of an import duty on lumber coming into Canada; from Mr. C. Beck, enquiring what steps had been taken regarding uniform inspection and grading of lumber, and referring to the method adopted by some manufacturers of cutting their lumber fully one-eighth inch thicker than the size for which it was intended; from Mr. W. T. Toner, of Collingwood, who was appointed by the Board of Management to prepare rules for the grading and inspection of lumber, stating that after consulting with a number of leading lumbermen, he was of the opinion that it would be impossible to establish a uniform grade of pine lumber for the Canadian market, as the several mill men have their own special grades and their customers understood their grading of lumber.

Correspondence was also read relating to the scarcity of cars last fall, and stating that after enquiries had been made as to the extent to which various lumber manufacturers had suffered, and in view of the fact that the situation had become somewhat relieved, it had been deemed advisable to take no further action.

Discussion regarding an import duty brought out the statement that the government were not prepared to take any action in the matter. The president then read the following report of the Board of Management:

REPORT OF BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

The reading of the minutes has fully informed you of what has engaged the attention of the Association since the last annual meeting, and little need be added by way of explanation. The deputation which you sent to Ottawa last spring to ask for a \$2-duty on lumber was supported by a number of members of Parliament, and was heard by Sir Wilfred Laurier and a number of his colleagues; no action, however, followed their representations, and it is not likely that anything will be done until the tariff generally comes up for consideration.

Delegates from the association waited upon the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific railways with a view to obtaining an equalization of rates on hardwood and pine lumber, but the action taken by the railways, while tending to equalization, was not favourable to the business generally, and rates on lumber have been raised during the year. The question of the shortage of cars at particular seasons of the year also engaged the attention of the Board of Management, who obtained a good deal of information from different sections of the country and let the matter stand over for further consideration.

While these minor questions may not appear to have been solved to our satisfaction, the real work of the Lumbermen's Association of Ontario and its value to the country generally, lies more in the influence it exerted in obtaining legislation whereby Ontario logs are now reserved for Canadian saw mills. And what makes this change of policy still more important is that it has been accompanied by a marked advance in the price of all kinds of lumber. The year 1899 will be remembered as



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First Vice-President Lumbermen's Association of Ontario.

one of the most eventful in the history of the trade. Opening with low prices and a moderate demand, it closed with higher prices for common lumber than had ever been obtained either in Canada or the United States. Midsummer of 1893 was the culmination of a period of good demand and fair prices for lumber. At that time came the financial panic which wrecked so many banks and financial institutions in the United States, and although we in Canada escaped the catastrophe in which our neighbors suffered, by reason mainly of the strength and stability of Canadian banks, yet it had the effect of curtailing business, and slowly from 1893 to 1896 prices receded; in the latter year there was a sharper decline, and 1897 and 1898 found the business entirely unremunerative. Many concerns collapsed in the United States, and mills on the Georgian Bay which had been running steadily for many years shut down rather than cut their standing timber at a loss. What probably made the lumber business still worse in Ontario was the passing of the McKinley Bill at Washington imposing a duty of \$2 per M feet on lumber entering the United States, and at the same time enacting a retaliatory clause, with the intention of providing logs for Michigan mills from Canadian forests, and at the same time preventing Canadian sawn lumber from entering into competition with the American sawn product. It was apparently a well devised plan, and its authors naturally plumed themselves on its success.

It looked for a short time as if the saw mill business in the Georgian Bay was doomed, there appeared no ray of

hope; to reimpose the old export duty of \$2 per M B. M. would only have increased the American duty to \$4, making it prohibitive.

The members of this Association and some others in Toronto to devise a remedy, and after full discussion determined to ask the Ontario Government to prevent export of all saw logs cut on Crown lands, and a deputation was appointed to lay their views before the Government, and ask for legislation to that effect. Immediate action was not taken on the question; the Government acted with caution and deliberation. They not only consulted the Ontario side of the question, but gave a careful and attentive hearing to Michigan owners of standing timber, who with some alarm hastened to place their views before the Government. The idea, however, of reserving Canadian logs for Canadian saw mills came before the public ear, and the Government passed the necessary orders in Council, backed up by legislation, and the manufacturing clause was inserted in all licenses after 30th, 1898. It was claimed by Americans and others that the Act was virtually a confiscation of property, and broke an agreement entered into with the province, further, that it was ultra vires as being an interference with trade and commerce, which the B. N. A. Act placed under the jurisdiction of the Dominion Government.

The question was brought before the Courts a long time ago, and Mr. Justice Street sustained the Act in the Ontario Legislature in his judgment, and vindicated the policy of this association, which can rightfully claim to have rendered a most signal service to the whole community, and if it had done nothing else, justifies its right to continue as an organization.

The effect of this new departure has been widely reaching; the large quantity of logs exported to Michigan from year to year dwindled to the few logs cut on the Reserves and private lands, and it is a question now considered whether we should petition the Dominion Government to apply the same policy to the Indian lands over which they have jurisdiction as the Ontario Government has adopted over Crown lands.

The most noticeable feature of the year is the rapid expansion of the saw-milling business in the Georgian Bay district; a number of new mills are under construction this winter, and every one of the old mills that have been silent for some years are being fitted up to manufacture the great crop of logs now being put out. It is the opinion of many that even with the great increase of sawing capacity it will be impossible to turn out logs into lumber this year. It would be needless to point out how this policy has benefitted all cognate industries and all manufacturers of supplies so largely needed.



MR. ROBERT WATT,
Second Vice-President Lumbermen's Association of Ontario.

it is satisfactory to think that in helping ourselves we have helped others also. As to what effect the Ontario policy had on the price of lumber it is difficult to estimate, but doubt the revival of trade which commenced on the continent in the fall of 1898, creating a demand for lumber for commercial and manufacturing purposes, was the main factor in raising prices, but there is little doubt that in the spring of 1899, when eastern buyers on looking for stock came to Michigan and found that two or three hundred million feet of logs that had hitherto been available in Canada would not be available, it started them on a determined quest for lumber that price became of