

Vault 9
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THE CANADA LUMBERMAN

VOLUME XV.
NUMBER 1.

TORONTO, ONT., JANUARY, 1894

(TERMS, \$1.00 PER YEAR
SINGLE COPIES, 10 CENTS)

MORE TARIFF OPINIONS.

THE probability of free lumber, as outlined in the Wilson bill, now before Congress, continues the uppermost question of discussion among lumbermen, both in Canada and the United States. As will be noted from the views we here append opinions differ very widely as to the wisdom and outcome of the measure.

Voices of Canada's Finance Minister.

Finance Minister Foster interviewed in regard to the alleged combination that has been formed in the United States to lobby against free lumber, said that the Government were giving every attention to the matter and were carefully studying the question of re-imposing an export duty on logs as promised last session, should fair treatment not be accorded Canadian lumber exported to the United States.

Saginaw Valley Lumbermen Speak.

The proposed removal of the tariff on lumber, says a Bay City, Mich., dispatch, in the Wilson bill has but little terror for Saginaw valley lumbermen. There are few of them who are not interested in Canadian pine, and the business had reached the point where Canadian interests must receive some concessions from the United States or the saw mills of the valley would quit business. Since the export duty on logs was taken off by the Canadian Government, the valley mills have practically lived on Canadian pine. During the past year upwards of 300,000,000 feet of logs have been brought across Lake Huron and converted into lumber by the mills of the Saginaw river, and the shore towns. Canadian logs have furnished labor for the employes of fully fifteen large saw mills. Unless there is an export duty placed on logs this winter the amount brought over next summer will undoubtedly exceed that of the past year. Nearly all of the lumbermen have arranged for cutting as much, or more, during the winter. The business of rafting logs across the lake employs hundreds of men, who sort the logs and man the tugs which do the towing. One firm in Bay City, the Saginaw Bay Towing Association, has ten powerful tugs for the work. About half the output comes from Spanish river, and the remainder from French river and Little Current.

A Tonawanda Wholesaler's Opinion.

The lumber business, says a Tonawanda correspondent of the Timberman, is very dull in this market at present and we cannot view the future outlook as offering much encouragement for lumbermen. Not only are we suffering in consequence of general depression of business and many idle workmen, but an additional menace by the threatened reduction of duty on Canadian lumber by the Wilson bill, thereby opening another floodgate for cheap box lumber and coarse stock. Every lumberman knows that we get very little good lumber from Canada, and also that box lumber is always to be obtained at consuming points at about actual cost of production and transportation, and Canadian box only makes it harder to realize on an investment including the log run, and consequently adds to the price of better grades of lumber. It is the better grades of lumber which enters largely into use in house building, such as siding, doors, sash, mouldings and finishing grades. So the result of the Wilson bill will be to lessen the price of coarse lumber, largely used by box makers and manufacturers, and increase that portion of the stock needed by the laboring man who is striving to build a home. With this view of the situation I do not think the prospects are very jubilant of lumber trade or in fact any other industry that is affected by the bill now before Congress.

From St. John, N.B.

A despatch from St. John, N.B., says:—Hon. J. P. Bass and Asa Warren, of Bangor, Me., are in the city consulting the American colony here, with a view to

working up opposition to the free lumber clause of the Wilson bill. Every sawmill but one at the mouth of the St. John river is owned by Americans, and the cut, which is supposed to be of logs from the State of Maine and floated down the St. John river to this city to be sawn, is admitted into the United States free of duty. It is notorious, however, that not more than one-third of the sawn lumber shipped from New Brunswick is cut in Maine, and the Cleveland Administration has had detectives at work recently looking up the figures. In view of the further fact that the chief American lumbermen here are Republicans and large contributors to the Republican campaign fund, it is not likely that the Democratic majority in Congress will pay much attention to their representations. Speaking to a reporter, Mr. Bass, who is a staunch Democrat, said the American residents of this city had a large amount of money invested in timber lands, mills, etc., which investments had been made in full belief that the duty would be maintained. If the free clause could not be recalled it was hoped a compromise might be effected in such a way as to gradually take off the duty, thereby giving the Americans time to work off their Canadian stocks and get out of their investments, if they so desire. Mr. Bass will report the result of his visit to the Bangor lumbermen.

Down in Old Virginia.

The saw and planing mill men of the Southern States have forwarded to Congress the following protest against the Wilson bill: "There is no other business where the capital is invested that pays so small a margin. It is only by the use of large capital, invested in all best labor saving and wood preserving appliances, that a profit is made. Especially is this the case in lumber operations of the south, owing to the grade of our timber; while the ground upon which it grows and the season are more unfavorable for moving the logs than in the north, making the cost of manufacture more, and at the same time the lumber commands a less price than the lumber north of us in the United States and Canada. The removal of the tax on lumber will enable Canada to market her lumber at a price that we can hardly meet. Especially is this the case in our lower grades, upon which we have no margin. It will simply necessitate our losing that much more. Only about 50 per cent. of our lumber enters into a class of work that justifies prices that pay us any profits, the other 50 per cent. being a low grade flooring and box boards, and has to be sold at a price that does not pay, and the latter at a loss. At the same time it must be made. It therefore raises a question of our being able to work if the prices suffer a reduction by reason of a removal of tax; and the suppression of this industry must necessarily bring distress upon a very large number of people. With the exception of the very small margin to the manufacturer under favorable circumstances, the value of the entire output represents labor and stumpage on timber."

Views of a Canadian-American Firm.

H. B. Shepard, of the Shepard-Morse Lumber Co., of Ottawa, Canada, and Burlington, Vt., said: "We think it is an advantage to the country to put lumber on the free list, because in the first place we feel very sure that the Michigan and Western pine men in general were instrumental in reducing the duty on pine when it was reduced from \$2 to \$1 a thousand. The reason for that was that the Canadian Government had imposed an export duty on logs, and the Michigan mills were unable to get logs in our own country, and, therefore, Westerners promised to reduce our duty on pine one-half, with the understanding that the duty on logs should be removed. If this restricted the production of this lumber in our country for the time being it would not be an injury to the country, but would enable

our forests to grow and give standing lumber a much greater value and would deplete the Canadian forests. It was quite noticeable when the duty on lumber was reduced before that the price went up on good pine from \$1 to \$4 on a thousand. We don't attribute this rise in the price of pine to the removal of the duty, but it goes to illustrate that the law of supply and demand is a much greater element than the reduction of the tariff. Consequently we feel that if the duty should be taken off of lumber, and that if the demand was good next spring, it would not affect the price materially. But it would benefit the Michigan men and Westerners, because it would prevent Canada from imposing an export duty upon logs, and thus the Western mills would be kept running. The same argument will apply to spruce, inasmuch as our own spruce is being cut off very fast, and it wouldn't be any injury to allow our forests to grow and deplete the forests of Canada."

On the Pacific Coast.

Victor H. Beckman, associate editor of the Puget Sound Lumberman, of Tacoma, in a recent interview, said: "If the proposed measure passes Congress there is no question but the lumber industry of the Pacific Coast of the United States will suffer. The lumbermen of these states, irrespective of political affiliations, are on record as being opposed to putting lumber on the free list. Fifty million dollars in round numbers represent the capital employed in the lumber industry of the Pacific Coast. There are 840 sawmills and 404 shingle mills in the states of Washington, Oregon and California, whose output of lumber footed up last year 2,300,000,000 feet of lumber and 2,200,000,000 shingles, of the aggregate value of \$27,000,000. The number of men employed in the logging camps of these states is 27,000, to whom are paid in wages annually \$18,000,000. Naturally, this industry, the mainstay of at least Washington and Oregon, is vitally interested in the tariff question. British Columbia, which will compete with the three states above mentioned, possesses a greater lumber area than the three states combined. Last year Washington and Oregon shipped into California, which is a great lumber consuming state, 325,000,000 feet of lumber, and shipped eastward to the prairie states 150,000,000 feet and 1,100,000,000 shingles. It is conceded that British Columbia will cut seriously into the California trade, and perhaps compete to some extent with Washington and Oregon lumber in the Eastern states if lumber is placed on the free list. The large cargo mills of British Columbia employing Chinese and Kanaka labor, there being little or no restriction to the importation of alien labor there, are in a position to unload into California vast quantities of lumber in competition with the mills on this side of the line, which pay white labor higher wages than obtain in any other industry section in this country. As fully one-half the exports of lumber from Washington and Oregon find their way to California, this is a very serious matter. So far as the eastern trade is concerned, there is but little direct competition, the British Columbia mills not having found a market as yet, but directly a lot of cheap lumber gets into the prairie states via the lakes and on the Atlantic seaboard, it will naturally handicap the shipment of Pacific Northwest fir, cedar and spruce by rail. British Columbia shingles cannot compete in the East with the Washington and Oregon product. Unlike a sawmill the bulk of the labor in a shingle mill is skilled, and as skilled mill labor commands the same remuneration in British Columbia as on Puget Sound, and as the cost of raw material is also about the same, there is no danger from that source. But the cheap shingles from Eastern Canada may do considerable harm in the prairie and may naturally cause the demand for the cedar article to drop off in a measure."