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ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 1921.

THE WAGES QUESTION

Forty million dollars—perhaps fifty million would be nearer the mark—is a conservative estimate of the capital now tied up in unsold lumber in the Province of New Brunswick. Of this amount, purchases on account of European Governments represent between twenty per cent and thirty per cent, leaving a balance of somewhere in the vicinity of thirty-five million dollars as the load now carried by local operators. A very large proportion of this is naturally covered by loans from various banks. But as lumber is not now an active commodity, and as these loans are practically stagnant, the position of lumbermen generally is more than ordinarily difficult. They are carrying a tremendous liability, they feel the responsibility devolving upon them of maintaining at least a measure of activity in their industry, but they are almost entirely prohibited from carrying on in their accustomed manner, or even from engaging in such enterprises as the future of the market might, to the most optimistic, seem to justify. It is quite natural that under these circumstances lumbermen everywhere should look around for methods whereby production costs maybe reduced. And it is equally obvious that in this search they should contemplate reductions in the price of labor. From all sections of the Province come intimations of lengthened working hours coupled in many instances with reductions in pay. It ought not to be anticipated that working men would hail with delight such reductions, accustomed as they have been for some years to very high remuneration, but if the lumber industry is to survive the present crisis every possible cent represented by reduced costs must be saved. And those who are now demanding the former scale of wages and working hours would be well advised to accept what they can get rather than make matters worse by increasing unemployment. Already in some sections of this Province there are families practically destitute. This is no time for any man with a job to let go his hold. The duty he owes to his family and to the country is to keep things moving at almost any sacrifice.

With such an amount of capital invested in non-active lumber, the banks are debarred from extending to other and more flourishing enterprises that accommodation which normal conditions might justify. And in consequence, every industry, every line of business, is directly affected to a greater or lesser extent by the stagnation of the lumber market. Those who have not kept themselves acquainted with world conditions are inclined to ask why lumbermen in this Province and elsewhere do not unload, take their losses and start fresh. As a matter of fact the majority of our lumber manufacturers and dealers are only too anxious to take their losses, but unfortunately it is impossible for them to unload at any price. A demand for lumber simply does not exist for one thing, nor are there very many buyers on the other side of the Atlantic who are in a position to purchase on such terms as shippers must obtain.

What is true of the attitude of lumbermen towards production costs applies equally to the problem of transportation. Those who control our Canadian railroads are preparing for a decided cut in wages as a step towards lessened freight and passenger charges, or perhaps primarily towards making earnings and operating expenses more nearly harmonize. And in this direction we are advised that the different Unions of Railway Employees contemplate fighting any such step. The leaders of these organizations must realize that at present a smaller percentage of their members are now enjoying regular employment than at any time in the past twenty years. And they cannot fail to appreciate that unless a very decided improvement occurs this percentage must be even further reduced. Possibly they consider it better that forty men out of one hundred should draw five dollars a day than a hundred men may be given the privilege of earning three dollars a day. If this is to be their attitude then we will have a struggle. If they are seized of any real appreciation of world-wide conditions they will be willing to meet with their employers, to calmly discuss every phase of the question, and to base their decisions on the soundest and most reliable information which can be obtained.

SHEER WASTE OF MONEY

Parliamentary estimates contain an item of one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for harbor improvements at St. John. The official explanation is that this sum is to be applied to the continuation of the Courtenay Bay plan. Anything that St. John harbor actually needs or that it would be the part of wisdom to provide, must take its chance in the supplementary estimates, when it will no doubt be subjected to all manner of criticism by Western representatives and where it may possibly be lost in the shuffle.

Isn't it about time that the people of St. John woke up, and through their representatives at Ottawa—if these representatives are any good—made our position so clear that neither the Federal Cabinet nor the one-eyed Westerners could ever again be mistaken as to our attitude? We have gone on year after year, from one government to another, dumping millions into Courtenay Bay for something the coming generations may require, something which will be utterly useless so far as St. John is concerned during the next decade at least, something which has created fortunes for individual contractors, but which has involved what can only be regarded as an almost criminal waste of public money. At a cost of millions of dollars we have built a breakwater in the wrong location. At a cost of millions more we have dredged a channel from the middle of Courtenay Bay to Partridge Island. And at a cost of further millions we have extended that misplaced breakwater across the newly dredged channel. If the thing were going to get us anywhere within sight of men now living it would be a different matter, but on the western side of St. John Harbor there is an opportunity—there always has been opportunity—for terminal extensions sufficient to accommodate the entire trade of Canada for the next thirty years.

But what has been the history of the West Side? Patchwork! from start to finish! Niggardly appropriations forced from unwilling governments by people who have gone to the limit of their own resources in supplying something for the rest of the country to use. It is almost inconceivable that a government which can deliberately attempt to squeeze a struggling community like St. John in the purchase of its harbor as a step towards commission, a government which year after year has failed to provide by means of breakwater extension that protection which its own wharves require, a government which is content to listen with utter unconcern to the interminable yet earnest representations of our civic authorities, can, without batting an eyelash, calmly hand out millions of dollars year after year for a job which most people have come to regard merely as a fat contract for influential politicians. It would pay Canada today to throw Courtenay Bay into the discard and, even in the face of such a loss as may be represented by the money already expended, to divert to the West Side the amount of money which has been placed in this year's estimates.

THE U. N. B.

The U. N. B. is about to apply to the Legislature for an addition to the grant now made to it from the Provincial Exchequer, to enable it to extend its usefulness. We imagine there will be little disposition in any quarter of the Legislature to object to such additional assistance being given. The University is part of the Provincial Educational system, in fact it may be called the Keystone of it. It is non-sectarian and open to every young man or woman in the Province without any qualification. Its non-denominational character distinguishes it from all colleges in the Maritime Provinces; in fact its very existence as a state institution necessitates that it should be undenominational.

There are other colleges in this Province, but they are strictly denominational, and for this reason they do not meet the requirements of students who do not belong to that particular denomination these colleges represent. These colleges are semi-private institutions, which of course do not receive—and very properly do not receive—any State aid.

The present needs of the U. N. B. are two-fold. First there is the need of increased accommodation in order that the institution may continue to carry on successfully the great work it has carried on for upwards of 100 years. In the second place, the institution needs a greater working capital. The present Provincial grant of $25,000 is wholly inadequate for the University to meet its current expenditure, otherwise it must degenerate into a second rate institution; and this at a time when the need of higher education was never more marked than it is at present. The needs of the time require that instruction should be given in many subjects that in former times were not part of the ordinary university course. Many scientific subjects must be taught such as Forestry, Mining, Engineering and other technical subjects, all of which call for high salaried instructors if propey results are to be obtained. Some further assistance may perhaps be needed for the Arts course also. The standard of the professional staff should be raised, but it is impossible to obtain the best men for the small salaries that the funds of the University will permit of payment. It is false economy; for if a teaching staff is to be provided at all, it should be of the best.

The Legislature is, we understand, to be asked to increase the grant to the U. N. B. from $25,000 to $50,000, and in view of all the circumstances of the case, the latter amount is not too much. It is utter nonsense to argue, as some people are doing, that because the Province makes no grant to any other college or university, therefore it should not increase the grant to the U. N. B. The U. N. B. is an institution, maintained for the express purpose of rounding off the educational system of the Province, and it has every right to look to the Government and the Legislature to maintain it at the highest pitch of excellence possible.

The Electrical by-Law is under consideration at City Hall. The outlook is that we are to have a further increase in construction costs. There is not enough work to keep the electrical inspector busy—no one ever supposed there would be in a town of this size with so little new building going on. There is not enough income to the office in the way of inspection charges to pay the salary of the officer in question. Consequently these fees must be doubled. We could very well afford to do away with this branch of our administration as a separate unit, and combine the duties of the officer with those of any one else in the civic employ capable of performing them. The officer in charge of the fire alarm system has some time on his hands, and could possibly spend it profitably in seeing that electrical contractors of long experience are qualified to properly perform their work, or in preventing amateurs from installing undesirable fire hazards.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Labor and the Bolsheviki.

A telegram of sympathy has been sent by the British Trades Union Congress to the Georgian Socialist Party on the occasion of their country being invaded by Boloshevists—London Times.

As If!

Canada having received a little navy ready-made from Britain, Hon. T. A. Crerar jumps up and proposes that Canada take a naval holiday. As if the naval history of Canada was the record of anything else but holiday! —Hamilton Herald.

The Rideau Water.

So much water is now rushing down Rideau rived and canal the scount of falling water wherever cascades are can be heard afar when the stillness of night prevails. Too bad that the water could not be conserved in the upper lakes, as is done in the case of the Mississippi. With so much water rushing down now the flood iso soon over. There will be just now quite a spectacular scene where the water of the Rideau join those of the Ottawa in the New Edinburgh section of the Capital.—Smith's Falls News-Record.

A Patriotic Protest.

The veterans who were with Pershing and Galbraith and Donovan at the great patriotic rally in Madison Square Garden will associate the fervor and thrill of the demonstration with the sacrifices and achievements of the American Army. An inspiring meeting it was, with the service men packed to the roof; the disabled, a thousand of them, honored by their comrades as they moved to their places; the whole assemblage rising with bowed heads as the mothers of the dead appeared. The strains of "The Star Spangled Banner" awoke the echoes of the building which has known so many mass meetings, but none that has made a stronger appeal to the national spirit.

It was a great protest against the hostile and seditious proceedings of those who had assembled in the same place three weeks before in an attempt to alienate America from France. That was an amazing performance, but loyal Americans have the satisfaction of knowing that it provoked a revival of the patriotic zeal, which possessed the United States all through the war—New York Times.

A Pair of Shoes.

Captain Edwards, H. M. Senior Trades Commissioned for Canada, told a story with a point at the Canadian Club luncheon. He wanted a pair of shoes, and stipulated that they must have been made "in the British Empire." One Montreal store told him they hadn't such a thing. Another store displayed what he believed to be Canadian shoes, but the Captain had to consult first with a mercantile agency in order to find out that this store was selling the product of a Canadian factory. Then he plucked up courage to go in and ask if the shoes were made in the British Empire. "They were made in Canada" was the reply, and he bought them. Nothing in the windows, nothing in the store, nothing on the shoes indicated that the goods were "made in Canada."

What happened to Captain Edwards is happening to most people every day. They want to buy "Made in Canada" or "Made within the Empire" goods, but often have great difficulty in finding out which is which.

Why not advertise every "Made in Canada" brand boldly, proudly, aggressively, and designate it so distincely that every shopper can distinguish it at a glance?—Montreal Herald.

Prayers Needed.

Visitor—"What does the chaplain do here?"

Freshman—"Oh, he gets up in chapel every morning, looks over the student body and then prays for the college."—Lehigh Burr.

Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAGE

I can stand on my hands with my feet agenst a wall on account of having bin practicing it for about 2 weeks, and this afternoon Mary Watkins was standing on her frunt steps looking exter grate, me thinking, G, heers a good chance to make a hit.

Wich I went over and started to do, standing on my hands with my feet agenst Mary Watkinses wall, hee saying, O izzent that perfeckly wonderfill, arent you afraid all your blood will go to your hed?

Wat do I care if it does? I sed, And I kepp of standing on my hands as if that was all I ever stood on, Mary Watkins saying, My goodniss, its jest like a circus, you must be terrible strong.

Wich I am, and I kepp on standing on them and jest then Puds Simkins came up, me seeing him upside down and saying, Hello Puds, heers something I bet you cant do.

And I got off of my hands and stood rite, Puds saying, Aw, who wunts to do that? I bet I could if I wunted to, ony who wunts to?

Puds is too fat to do it, hee hee, sed Mary Wakins, and Puds sed, O I am, heh, well do you wunt to see me do it?

Yes, sed me and Mary Watkins, and Puds sed, Well jest for that I wont, and I sed, Watch me do it agen, everybody. Wich I did, and Puds took 4 cents out of his pockit and started to jiggle them, saying, Hay Mary, come on erround to Mommy Simminses with me and you can pick out 2 cents werth of eny kind of candy you wunt.

O how perfeckly luvly, I know jest wat kind allreddy, sed Mary Watkins.

And she wawked down the street with Puds Simkins, leeving me standing there on my hands as if I was jest somebody not doing enything special.

Proving money counts more than branes.

A BIT OF VERSE

OVER A GRAVE.

Loving and low
The bending buds and grasses bow and blow,
And whisper to each other "One at rest
Lies here beneath with lillies on her breast;
She was so tired, and she fell asleep;
Let her lie here the while a watch we keep.
Hush!

The Sunbeams fell,
And kissed her grave as though they loved it well,
And whispered to each other: "She was fair,
We used to frolic in her sunbright hair,
But she grew tired and she fell asleep;
Let her lie here the while a watch we keep.
Hush!

The West Wind said:
"Why watch you here? She is what men call dead!"
"Nay," said the grasses, "she but fell asleep,
They put her here that we a guard might keep."
"Hush," said the sunbeam, "let her lie and rest;
She and her heart were tired. It is best.
Hush!"

—M. R. Burton.

THE LAUGH LINE

Something to Strive For.

Lives of mister crooks remind us
We may do a bit of time,
And, departing, leave behind us
Thumb-prints in the charts of crime
—Life.

Too Absurd.

"She is neglecting her game of bridge dreadfully."

"Why is she doing that?"

"Oh, some silly excuse. Says the children need her, I believe."—Boston Transcript.

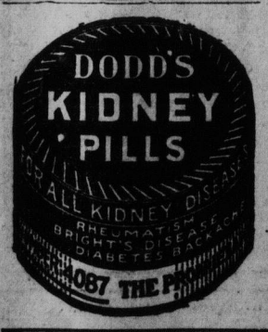
A Model Husband.

A man went to his office smiling contentedly and looking altogether happy. His partner asked him what had happened to make him look so cheerful. "Why," he answered, "any man would be happy if his wife said to him what my wife said to me this morning. She said that I was a model husband. Isn't that something to make a man cheerful?" "Oh," I don't know,' replied the partner; "It depends altogether on what she really means." He took a dictionary from the shelf, and after a moment's search read out, "Model—a small imitation of the real thing."—Edinburgh Scotsman.

Before and After.

"Do you know what it is to go before an audience?"

"No, I spoke before an audience once, but most of it went before I did."



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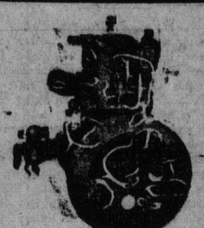
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