

WESTERN RETAIL LUMBERMEN'S ASSOCIATION.

(Special correspondence CANADA LUMBERMAN.)

THE annual meeting of the Western Retail Lumbermen's Association was held in the MacIntyre Block, Winnipeg, on Wednesday, 13th inst., and in the absence of the President, Mr. J. L. Campbell, Vice-President, occupied the chair, and delivered the following address:

Gentlemen and Fellow Members of the Western Retail Lumbermen's Association:—

It is my esteemed privilege to have the pleasure of welcoming your presence in attendance at this our fourth annual meeting.

I am glad to report to you that the affairs of this Association have received close attention at the hands of your officers, and while there may not have been so many complaints acted upon this year as in the last, there were some very exceptional difficulties to dispose of.

The season's business, as you no doubt are aware, was one of restriction and caution on the part of the dealers, particularly so in the rural districts; and the wisdom of this has been apparent in the fact that owing to the low prices obtainable by the farmers for their products—especially wheat—the great staple of the country, thereby seriously crippling them in making payments. I am unaware of any failures in business during the year of any member strictly in the lumber trade. This, I think, speaks in high commendation of the action taken.

The Committee appointed at the last annual meeting, re railway freight, lost no time in calling upon the C. P. R.'s authorities, memorializing them for a reduction of the excessive lumber freight tariff, in order that lumber might be sold to the consumer at a less price. In this, we are glad to say that the manufacturers to the east of us followed up the interview had with the railway authorities, persistently urging upon them the necessity and very great importance of making a substantial reduction in their charges, and as you know, after some months' deliberation a reduction was made, and the manufacturers were able to announce to you a material reduction in the cost of lumber from the east. While this reduction may not have been as much as you were looking for, I think it is a matter that I may well congratulate you upon.

I may mention that your Board of Directors had taken into consideration the question of organizing a Mutual Fire Insurance Company in connection with this Association, but having observed the disaster that had overtaken the Merchants' Mutual Company, although considering the scheme with much favor, it was decided to leave the matter in abeyance. I notice that the North Western Lumbermen's Association have had much success with their insurance branch, having done over a million dollars of business in less than a year, and that the sister lumber associations of the States appear to be fast following in the wake of the North Western Lumbermen's Association in organizing lumber insurance companies in connection with the lumber associations.

A bill to amend the Lien Law was kindly taken in charge by our fellow dealer, Mr. Burrows, M.P.P., and after getting the first reading of it, upon canvassing the members of the Legislature, he found that it could not be carried through, and it was thought prudent for him to withdraw it until this session, when it is probable the chances of its becoming law will be much improved, should you still desire it.

It is with sorrow that I have to inform you that our Association has sustained a severe loss in the death of one of its Directors. I refer to the late Peter Atkin, of Morden. Mr. Atkin was a man of great value to the Association, not only for the unsparing interest he bestowed upon it, but for his wisdom as a counsellor in deliberating upon the matters coming before our Board. He was also highly esteemed for his personal qualities by all whose privilege it was to become acquainted with him.

As the Secretary will have some statistics to give you and some statements to make, I will no longer take up your time, only to thank you for the high honor you did me in electing me Vice-President for the second time. And I desire to thank my fellow directors for their good attention to the Association's work at all times, and to

say to them that it has been a work of pleasure and satisfaction to me to have been associated with them on the Board.

The Chairman called upon the Secretary to read the minutes of the last annual meeting, and upon the same being confirmed, the Secretary proceeded to make his annual statements in the following address:—

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

I too, along with the Vice-President, desire to state that it affords me much pleasure to have the privilege of meeting you here on this occasion.

The Financial Statement to 31st Dec., 1894, a copy of which was mailed to each member early in January, shows a surplus of \$1063.34, with outstanding dues amounting to \$320.

During the last year I have to report having dropped from the membership list, 19 active and 3 honorary members, for the following reasons: 14 having quit the lumber business, 2 removed by death, 1 having changed his place of business, and 2 for refusal to pay annual dues. The honorary members removed were for the following reasons: One by request to be stricken from the list and refusal to pay dues, one for neglecting to pay dues and one for violation of the by-laws of the Association. We have added to the list 15 new names, 9 active and 6 honorary. Our membership now stands with 130 active and 23 honorary members on the list. We have had two meetings of the Directors and three meetings of the Executive Committee.

During the year four complaints were made and acted upon, and while some further grievances were reported to me, the complainants declining to comply with clause 16 of the By-laws, no investigation was made.

Owing to a change in the tariff of the Dominion Government in the early spring, permitting the importation of American lumber free of duty, we experienced a disturbing effect upon some of our members at points where American lumber was brought in and at frontier points. In order to meet the exigencies of the cases affected thereby, we deemed it prudent to allow open price list thereat, so as to enable the dealers interfered with to hold their trade. This no doubt has been to some extent injurious to the surrounding districts therefrom, and perhaps such dealers should have further consideration in this matter. I have no doubt that upon the revival of the lumber business in the States to what it was up to the last couple of years, and the lowering of the price of Canadian lumber that has already taken place, that the American lumber will not long continue to be a competing factor in the trade, and that the present position of business at such points will not continue for any lengthened time. I ask you to bear with me should I be a little tedious in making some remarks, which may be pertinent to the welfare of the Association at this time.

I have observed, with regret, a restive disposition on the part of some members, for the reason, as has already been stated to me in some instances, that they failed to see that any good was derivable to them from being members of the Association, simply because a direct return was not received in lieu of the annual fee paid; while some others have said to me that it was no protection to them, mentioning some exceptional circumstances that had arisen, and were interfering with their business, which was plainly beyond and outside of the Association, and which any reasonable person should know that the Association could not deal with.

In regard to such statements, I make answer that I understand the purposes and objects of the Association to be for the mutual benefit of the retail dealers, in directing the wholesale business into the channel of selling exclusively to the established retail dealers in the ordinary business of the trade, and as well to limit the number of dealers in consistency with the amount of business to be done and to maintain fair and reasonable profit on business done. If I consider aright the aims and objects of the Association, I have no hesitation in affirming that it has brought about much that was sought for in its organization, if not to the full extent. Unquestionably there have been many unfaithful members in the Association, and probably there will continue to be some who will evade the by-laws and be irritating. While this is unfortunate, and delinquents may for some time

succeed in undermining and doing unfair things, and it may also be very difficult to get the necessary proof in some cases to discipline them, yet on the whole, should the members in the main implicitly observe the rules and by-laws of the Association, I think that it has been shown that many of the delinquents can be brought, in an unmistakable manner, to feel the error of their ways.

I think the Association has had a career of much success, and the retail dealers should be satisfied with its usefulness and stand nobly by it. The Association has been singularly fortunate in receiving true and sympathetic support from the honorary members, thereby adding strength and advantage to it.

Very different is the experience of our sister associations in the States. There they are confronted by many of the manufacturers, wholesalers, middlemen and scalpers, ready to sell to consumers direct on all opportunities; but in spite of such difficulties, the present is an era in lumber associations there—from Massachusetts in the east to the several southern and western states—and through energy and live interest by the members, they are well maintained. In the same way it behooves you all to enlist your good services and energetic influence on behalf of this Association, so as to keep it up to what it has been and make it capable of extending and advancing your business interests. Some dissatisfaction has been evinced in the requirements of a member changing his yard from one town to another, to pay membership fees and dues. Also I have been asked what constitutes a member, as to the quantity of stock in the yard. I ask your consideration of these matters.

AN ELOQUENT SPEECH.

After the reading of the Secretary's report, the Vice-President spoke eloquently and enthusiastically on Association matters. He said that during the past year the Directors had given very careful attention to the various subjects brought before them. Doubtless some were not always satisfied with the decisions arrived at; of course every one thought his side of the question the right one; but it should always be borne in mind that there were two sides to every question, and the board of Directors had always tried to get the fullest information from all sides and give a conscientious decision. If they have erred in any particulars it was because the proper evidence was not forthcoming. He here paid a tribute to the excellent services rendered by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Association, Mr. I. Cockburn. He always found him to be giving the most careful attention to all matters pertaining to the welfare of the Association, and believed that the success so far attained was largely due to his unremitting labors. He proceeded to show that the members of the Association had every reason to be proud of what it had accomplished. In the first place, it was unique among the lumber associations on the continent, inasmuch as no other approached it in the completeness of its character and operations. With scarcely an exception it included every dealer and manufacturer in the territory covered, and the principle recognized, of buying from and selling only to members of the Association, had proved of immense advantage to the members.

By the principle of preventing undue multiplicity of yards at a single point, each dealer was assured of his rightful amount of trade and fair profits. By this elimination of illegitimate modes of business, the standing of every man in the trade was strengthened, so that, while during the first year failures had occurred in almost every form of mercantile life, not a single failure had occurred among active members of the Association, a state of affairs, of course, gratifying to the wholesale dealers. It might be said that this success has been attained at the expense of the public, but such is not the case. In no instance has the price of lumber been advanced, but on the contrary, from the nature of their business, wholesalers have been enabled to reduce their prices. Add to this the reductions consequent upon freight rate concessions, concessions which could not have possibly been obtained without the united force of our Association, and we have a good substantial reduction in price, of which the public have had the advantage. It might further be said that the members of the Association do not intend to put in their pants' pockets, any gains in this way, but will continue to give the pub-