

## UNION RATE AND GOVERNMENT PRINTERS.

DISCUSSING the demand of the printers in the Government Bureau at Ottawa that they should be paid more, The Toronto Star says: "The employes of the Government Printing Bureau at Ottawa, in asking for an increase of wages from \$12 to \$15 a week, have properly met with a refusal. When the country runs a printing office, it should retain that one check upon the cost of production found in the rule which says that the highest union rate of wages paid in Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal, shall be paid, and no more. An undue advantage would be had over the employing printers of the country if union men could use political influence in order to get increased wages from the Government Bureau, and thus force up the scale that private publishers would have to pay. Not by whim, but by the conditions of trade, wages are regulated, and the union scale of wages is usually the right scale in relation to the state of business and the prices paid to men in other callings similar in the degree of skill and intelligence called into play. It is safer for union men to stick to their unions and their scale of pay, and if the men in the printing bureau get what the men of their trade get outside, they have little to complain of, especially as they have all the holidays that come along, and work six hours a week less than what is called the 'union week.'

"The printing bureau does not have to make ends meet, as the private publisher is compelled to do, and so the only sound course is to accept the scale of wages that rules in the open field of labor."

## THE QUEBEC LIBEL LAW.

IN a carefully written and judicious article, The Montreal Star discusses the decision in the libel suit of Horner vs. The Star, in which the paper was condemned to pay \$50 and costs. The Star has so often served the public as an exposé of wrongs, and a vigilant friend of the community that its arraignment of the civil law affecting libels in the Province of Quebec is reasonable and convincing. It says:

"The whole spirit of the law of libel in the Province of Quebec as it affects the newspaper press is unworthy of the age and unworthy of an enlightened people. It is one of the worst instances of lawyer-made legislation and a powerful argument against the folly of sending so many lawyers to the Legislature. The average lawyer will at once take exception to the phrase which suggests that the law of libel should be any different 'as it affects the newspaper press' to the law as it affects the public generally. Yet the bench and the bar are not slow to recognize that the press has immense special moral responsibilities in connection with the publication of matters which are prima facie libellous. The administration of the law itself depends largely for its efficacy upon the publicity it obtains through the press. For a large class of evil-doers, the newspaper report has more terrors than the frown of the magistrate. Against the great army of migratory swindlers, the public depend more for protection upon the press than they do upon the police. Yet the courts never tire of pointing out that the press has absolutely no privilege, that in every case of newspaper mis-statement technical malice is to be


assumed just as in the case of a man who deliberately pens a slanderous postcard. A few years ago The Star was condemned to pay heavy damages for publishing a report which the jury declared to be 'a true report published without malice, in good faith and in the public interest.'

"In another case the jury were instructed that The Star was to be held responsible not only for what it said but for a good deal that it did not say. Thus, the paper reported that there being suspicious circumstances about the death of a certain individual his body would be exhumed and an inquest held on the following day. The statement was strictly accurate as to the exhumation and inquest and surely the suspicious circumstances might be inferred from these facts, because it is not usual to exhume bodies and hold inquests unless there are suspicious circumstances. Surely, also, it would seem to be in the public interest that the public should be notified in advance of such inquiries. There was not the slightest hint as to the suspicions being directed against any particular person. But witnesses were put in the box to prove that they knew a good deal more than The Star alleged, that they knew of unfriendly relations between the deceased and the plaintiff in the case and that from what they knew and what The Star said, they inferred that the plaintiff was suspected of murder. The learned judge who tried the case instructed the jury that the inferences drawn by these witnesses were sufficient to justify a verdict against the paper, and sure enough the verdict was rendered."

The Star goes on to say that the Ontario law is more liberal to the press. It still requires amendment however, especially in the matter of security for costs, and it is a convenient time to consider whether the matter should not be pushed this session.

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