

is ill-advised in the face of the fact that two or three of our principal Canadian railways own and operate lines in the United States, and that the Montreal Telegraph Company own lines in several different States adjoining the Dominion with corresponding advantages to the business public.

As to the "public interest" more directly, Mr. Robinson very properly remarked that there were serious objections to having two separate and independent lines of telegraph along a railway, working in hostility to each other. Mr. Robinson speaking about *two* lines instinctively led to the conclusion that the interests of the Dominion Telegraph Company were alone considered by Mr. Mackenzie. This gentleman could not ask for confiscating legislation in the interest of one company. He therefore asks it in the interest of all possible companies. But surely he cannot contemplate a little forest of poles running along the railway lines. The injustice that the legislation asked for would do the railways, was pointed out in 1874 by every prominent railway man in the country. "We have," said one gentleman, "telegraph lines on both sides of our road, and to put more would be to render the whole thing useless." Another railway magnate said the throwing open the railways to telegraph companies would "hamper" them and lead to "unfortunate results," while the managing director of a third pointed out the dangers which would result from an unrestricted occupation of the tracks by handcars and lorries under the control of telegraphic workmen, not only irresponsible to the railway companies, but utterly ignorant of the signals and regulations in force for the protection of the lives and property of the travelling public.

The Committee of the Ottawa Board of Trade reported that the grievance complained of by the Dominion Telegraph Company was a legitimate business transaction. This arrangement, too, it seems to us, is not only legitimate but advantageous to the railway companies, to the telegraph companies, and to the public. When we remember the system of signalling and the imperative conditions of telegraphic efficiency, we are compelled to admit that "public interest" and "public safety" require that railway companies shall grant such privileges and facilities for the erection of telegraph wires along their tracks as may seem to them advisable and proper—one telegraph company or a dozen as they may themselves choose. To compel all railways to give free and unrestricted right of way to all telegraph companies who may demand

it "in the public interest," is rather an absurd claim when we remember that people invest their money in telegraph as in other enterprises solely with a view to personal profit.

We need not dwell on the vision of bogus telegraphic companies blackmailing the railway companies, which rises in the train of the wide demands of Mr. Mackenzie. It is enough that there is no monopoly. The highways are open to the Dominion Telegraph Company. It is open to them to make proposals to all future railways, to all in fact which have not already made exclusive arrangements with other telegraphers. But we do not think they can expect the support of a community whose wealth is based on contracts, and is the growth of enterprise, in asking the Legislature to tear up legitimate agreements and redress the natural advantages of earlier enterprise, and large investment of capital. "Equal rights" are impossible unless the conditions of time can be abolished. Equal rights in any true sense of equality already exist. The equal rights asked for would in fact be a bonus to the Dominion Telegraph Company, taken out of the pockets of the railway companies and of the Montreal Telegraph Company.

#### THE CRAZE FOR STOREKEEPING.

For many years past it has been evident enough to prudent men that in this country the number of storekeepers was out of all proportion to the business to be profitably done. A failure list representing in 1876 twenty millions of capital, does not seem to have convinced Canadians that shopkeeping, as at present carried on, is a losing business for the great majority of those engaged in it. Too many country stores, too many wholesale warehouses, and too much bank accommodation to importers, has wrought a great deal of the evil which manifests itself in insolvent estates and bankrupt stocks.

The trade naturally tributary to any business centre, is so divided amongst the numerous shopkeepers, or in part absorbed by the grangers, who are constantly making purchases in towns and cities outside, that there is, even with a moderate profit upon one's goods, but little money to be made in the business—scarcely, indeed, a fair living for each, if the trade were equally distributed. But this equal distribution is not practicable. Every new competitor (and there are constantly new stores springing up) offers "special inducements," and the style of bait generally used to allure customers takes the form of "a war on old prices."

Then the recollection of the old adage, that a new broom always sweeps clean, assists to cause a rush of customers to the new store for cheap goods.

A few months are spent in this sort of thing, and the result is that a large business has been done at the new establishment, often without a cent of profit; and, what is worse, a large portion of these sales has been booked, and the accounts are yet to be collected. All this has been done in order to establish a business. But while it has been going on, what has been the effect upon the old established stores? They would not quietly look on and see their customers enticed away. Many of them could not afford to do so, having paper maturing that they were obliged to meet, or seek indulgence or a compromise. In order to meet this paper sales had to be made even at ruinous prices. As a necessary consequence the entire business of the town or village has been for weeks, it may be months, carried on at a loss to every one except it be the consumer, who is not by any means adequately grateful for the temporary advantage he has gained.

What is the effect of this style of business upon the wholesale trade? The retail dealer must have something to live on while he is selling goods, even if they be sold without profit; if he cannot live out of profits, he must live, and does live, out of capital, if he have any; out of his creditors' stock, if he have not. The wholesale merchant can no more than the retail one, long exist without profit in his business. It becomes a question of backbone then. With instance after instance of extension, compromise, or absconding, eating away his resources, he must feel the pressure; and if his capital be unequal to the strain, and his banker, for satisfactory reasons, withhold his aid, the wholesale dealer too must fail.

A correspondent in one of the counties lying south of London writes us very sensibly upon the lamentable ignorance which prevails amongst those out of trade in regard to the laborious duties and worrying responsibilities of business men. "This ignorance," he says, "is being continually transferred into the ranks of trade itself, and never fails to bear its legitimate fruit. Comfortable farmers sell or mortgage good property on which they and their families have lived for years in comparative ease, and with a few thousand dollars proceeds they dash into trade in the village or town, and in a year or two lose every cent, and become village drudges or paupers for succeeding years of their lives. Men seem to think no apprenticeship, or experience, or special knowledge is required to start a store in town; and yet they might see, if they would, that for the last twenty,