

and commerce and intelligent men from the ranks of the iron workers, which committee should meet quarterly to settle the men's wages upon a sliding scale, a fixed relation being established between the price of iron or steel and the daily wage of the worker. Thus: beginning with, say, 1st May, if the price of the billet was so much per hundredweight, the wage for the quarter should be so many shillings per day. If steel advanced in price, the wage should advance *pari passu*. If steel declined in the world's market, the men's wages must come down.

For a time, all was well. That is to say, the steel market steadily tended upwards, and the men's wages followed its rise. A period of activity in steel production ensued, and for many quarters in succession there was an unbroken series of advances in price of steel and a corresponding increase in wages of the prosperous "workingman," who admitted that the conference committee was a heaven-sent institution.

But, observe—the **very first time** that this quarterly arbitration board had to report that the price of steel showed a decline and that men's wages must come down, the men refused to abide by the agreement of their representatives—ceased work rather than agree to it! This breach of faith interrupted a current of prosperous activity in the British iron and steel trade and laid the foundation for a lack of confidence between iron-master and iron-worker which has affected—may one not say embittered—their relations ever since.

Therefore, having this painful instance in mind, one can hardly expect the workers to agree to Sir Christopher's fourth proposal, which is the formation of a council to settle all disputes. As to the two which offer the men a choice of buying out a shipyard or becoming partners in it, they seem as unlikely as the other, in the present temper of the men. It would seem, then, unhappily, that the alternative of closing the works is the only one, if the workers will not listen to the voice of reason.

PRESENT PRICES AND DEMAND.

Under this head the "Canadian Cement and Concrete Review" in the October number, discussing the situation, said:—

In looking over the present building situation in Canada one cannot but be convinced that low prices and light demand go hand in hand. While it would seem that low prices of building materials should stimulate trade, such is not the case. Supply and demand regulate current prices. Light prices usually stand for a small margin of business as well as a small profit. Comparing present prices of building materials with those of a year ago they may in general be nominally the same; however, materials may and have been purchased much below the schedule of 1907. Tenders for both large and small work have been in many cases considerably below those furnished a year ago. Builders could hardly hope for better conditions for building. The present condition of the labor market makes it possible for any builder to obtain the most efficient labor at moderate wages. . . . Low cost of materials, a much better class of workmanship and greater efficiency of labor with the associated saving of time, all point to the present as a time to build. With less work available, competition is more keen and better service will be rendered. With the smaller outlay and many to choose from, the builder of to-day should realize well on his investment. At the present time of money tightness, however, many problems have to be solved by him in his efforts to decide this question. The interests of the various elements of trade are securely linked together, and we could hardly expect to see activity in the building trade coincidentally with a depression in other lines. A loosening up of the money market and a general revival of business activity would doubtless do more to stimulate the building trade than

can ever be accomplished through low cost of materials, abundance of labor and the other conditions of cost associated with a financial depression that might tempt the speculative builder.

THE CANADIAN SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING.

The Toronto branch of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers have invited the parent society to hold the next annual meeting, which will be held during January, 1909, in Toronto. At the last annual meeting held in Montreal there was a strong feeling that this year it should be held in some outside city. Ottawa, Quebec, Toronto, and Winnipeg men mentioned as centres that would welcome Canadian engineers and centres in which a meeting of the society would awaken interest in the organization.

By some arrangement the choice of meeting place has narrowed down to Montreal or Toronto, and in the final decision the members near and dwelling in Montreal will likely be found desiring a Toronto meeting.

The Toronto Branch is strong in numbers, organization and on entertainment. A society endeavoring to unite engineers in a country so vast, so cosmopolitan, and suffering so from growing pains, as Canada, must come to the individual member as much as possible. It would be a great help to the Canadian Society to meet in 1909 in Toronto.

But while on the subject more might be said. It would be a mistake for the annual meeting to oscillate between Montreal and Toronto. There are other cities where successful meetings might be held.

Other cities than Toronto have branch societies. In other cities a little campaigning would arouse enthusiasm enough to assist in organizing branches in those cities and nothing better than an annual meeting held there, could be used to open the campaign.

INACCESSIBLE ECONOMIZERS.

When the rapid increase in a factory's requirements for steam far exceed those anticipated at the time the boiler plant was laid out the installation of economizers is often the best remedy. In such instances an economizer must usually be placed with secondary regard to ease of access and cleaning. But what excuse can a consulting engineer offer for placing an economizer between the boiler-house wall and the by-pass flue in such a way that repairs or cleaning is practically impossible, particularly in a new plant where the value of land is of very little importance.

In a specific case where this was done the choking of the draft through the dirty economizers made it absolutely necessary that the by-pass damper should be partly opened even with a light load. The designer of the plant explained that a higher volatile coal was being burned than that for which the plant was designed, and that as a consequence the economizer could not handle all the gases because of the resulting increase in volume. But an analysis of the coal by the Coal Department of the Arthur D. Little Laboratory, Boston, showed that the coal being burned actually contained 2 per cent. less volatile than the coal originally designated. Under this condition the economizer was increasing the efficiency by less than 3 per cent.

BECOMING A CHESTNUT.

Once more it is officially announced to-day that "work will soon begin" on the hydro-electric transmission line. One feels like saying, as Hamlet did to the player, "Come, leave thy damnable faces and begin."—Hamilton Herald.

—An important deal has just been put through whereby Nobels, the famous English powder manufacturers, have purchased the Acadia Powder Company's plant at Waverley, near Halifax.