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## THE TIMES.

The reply of Sir John A. Macdonald at Ottawa to the deputation of workmen who made application to him for employment was scarcely more or less than was to have been expected. Like so many other questions in the Dominion this one has never had its fair share of discussion, and governments do not often act without some degree of sympathetic union with the public opinion outside. The question raised was one of political economy, a science upon which a government neither cares to originate nor to dictate. It is the social philosophers professing those sentiments of Christianity that form the ballast and safeguard of our politics who, on the labour question, are just now in arrear—because it really lies with them to define the true principles of action. Canada spends large sums every year in giving the same kind of assistance which the Ottawa deputation solicited in their very respectful petition to workingmen and their families from abroad. That is done expressly for the sake of setting up the country. But on a closer view, we find that the assistance afforded is now confined to those who can certify to an intention to make the cultivation of the soil their occupation. We used to assist the mechanics until our limited demand for that class of workmen became fully supplied. Now, the request of the workingmen was somewhat vague in its terms, and it would be interesting to ascertain to what extent the Ottawa men were willing to become farm labourers, and at the same time how many were physically fitted for the work. It goes without saying that it would be a real gain to the country to have all its work seekers fully employed. The very claim is pathetic—and to the extent to which it is left unanswered does an inconsistency seem to attach upon a new country seeking population from over-peopled lands.

The difficulties—for we all know there are difficulties—are chiefly in matters of detail. If we concede—as we may well do—that the country would not be doing wrong in making some effort to carry its men to their work, the same as it does in the case of the immigrant population, we have to ascertain, to begin with, what these men are who have placed themselves in the position of applicants, and whether they can serve the general purpose of the country, and we shall hardly ascertain this, except by some amount of organized enquiry. Then will come in the serious question of the location of responsibility, as regards the unemployed people. Sir John I believe is right in assuming that this is municipal in its essential nature. But it may also be assumed that the government of a country acts from a broader view and more systematically than any municipalities, and the conclusion might fairly be come to that the creation of facilities for ascertaining the fields of agricultural labour, where men are really wanted, and the providing railway and steamboat passes for suitable and properly certified men to those fields might devolve on the general government, and the entire expenses of the actual travel be afterwards charged by it upon the several municipal bodies from which, for their own benefit, the men were sent out. The question would be thus narrowed into something like practicable dimensions, and the enlightened treatment of it would become a material, as well as a moral gain for the community; for the men have to live in any case, and some one has to

provide for them, not because they can demand to live without working, but because, as a people, we have determined that our poor shall not starve. The municipalities would gain by the relief from a civic burden more than they would be called upon to contribute, and for the future of the country it will be better to make the required provision by obtaining work for them than by any arrangement that will leave them in idleness and its inevitable degradation.

The Mayor and Aldermen of Ottawa are taking a great interest in the unemployed of their city. They have made an appeal to Government, suggesting that the Rideau Canal be deepened at the Cut near the city. Of course everything depends upon the answer to the question: Is this work necessary? Government cannot create a demand for labour just that men may find work, but the men may fairly expect some sort of attention and help from us now that we have voted a round hundred thousand dollars to Ireland. It is pretty generally understood that "charity begins at home," and it is against every law of humanity that we should feed the far-off and neglect those who are at our very doors.

The Government could hardly do better than set to work and revise our whole system of immigration. By the policy now pursued the country is being filled up with just the thrifless class we do not want. The Government agent goes to large towns and cities, persuading the out-of-work, and generally, the lazy part of them, that they can emigrate to Canada for less than nothing, and find a poor man's Paradise when they arrive. In that way we get the very class of settlers we cannot do with. We want farmers; hardy and hard workingmen, who can rough it for a time and accept the chance of making money slowly. It does seem an anomaly that in a country possessing millions of acres of the very best farming land so many hundreds of men should be out of employ.

It seems to me that Mr. James Whyte has adopted a plan for settling people at Maccannamack which might well be followed by the Government, or by a private company on a large scale. He clears a plot of ground, builds a house upon it, furnishes the house—scantily, of course, but still enough to start upon—and gets a rent at so much per year until the whole is paid back with reasonable interest. The English Hodge can quite well understand emigrating—he is by no means passionately attached to his home—but the idea of going into a new country, where he will have to build a house with the wood he himself has cut down, clear the ground foot by foot and till it as he clears it, is what he cannot conceive. Let him have a house to go into—no matter how small, or how roughly constructed, or how limited the space he can at once use, it is enough to begin upon. There are many thousands of English and Scotch farmers—living, or trying to live on small farms at ruinous rents and decreasing crops, and farm labourers who would come at once, if they could be furnished with reliable information, and with reasonable promises. I wonder some of our leading commercial men who have an interest in the development of the country do not start a scheme of this kind. Let them form a company, get territories from the Government at a cheap rate, put up a house upon each farm, send some agents over to Great Britain who can be trusted to tell the truth, and see that the men to be helped to this country are really industrious people and not loafers. I am certain that this would tend to the advantage of the country, and to the personal gain of those forming the company.

Mr. Parnell is coming after all, it appears. From a re-  
marks he made to a newspaper correspondent he is gra-  
such entities as mayors and corporations. In truth he