

THE STRIKE YET WITH US.

Yesterday brought no real change in the situation with respect to the strike along the river front. Work went on with strike-breakers in the same happy-go-lucky style that has been in vogue for two weeks past, and although negotiations were in progress looking to the settlement of the controversy, there was more of quibbling and hairsplitting than anything else. The Agents met the proposition from the Screwmen on Monday, providing for a general investigation of conditions and a resumption of work in the meantime, by a counter proposal to select an arbitration board of four from each side, but work not to be resumed until the odd member or umpire is chosen. This counter proposition the Screwmen will consider to-day, it is understood, but as it provides that the matter of the Screwmen's demands is to be the first thing disposed of, the plan is not essentially different from those proposed before and rejected. How it will now be received remains to be seen.

The Stevedores of the port yesterday made a joint proposition to the Steamship Agents to stow all cotton at 18 cents per bale, at which price it is understood this port would be placed on a parity with Galveston, but the proposition was not even considered. The contest has apparently narrowed down to a fight for supremacy in the matter of dictating the wages to be paid labor, and not the placing of the port on a parity with Galveston. Incidental to the fight cotton, grain and other produce that would otherwise come here are being diverted elsewhere, and shipping is being ordered to other ports. It does not appear to matter much to the contestants that the commerce of the port is being ruined, that thousands of people not directly concerned in the contest are being injured, and that the future is being seriously handicapped. To the foreign ship owner who can send his ships anywhere if cargoes are to be had, nothing more serious is involved but temporary inconvenience; but to the merchants who reside in New Orleans, have their capital invested here and must use the port for the shipment of their goods, the tie-up means heavy present loss and the prospect of permanent impairment of their trade interests.

The longer the controversy lasts and the more the causes leading up to it are studied the more imperatively necessary does a thorough investigation appear to be in order to understand clearly just what a parity with Galveston means. A mere reduction of the cost of stowing cotton would mean nothing in the way of advantage to the port unless it brought about a lowering of the ocean freight rates, since more cotton would not come here without an inducement of that kind. The shipping interests have offered no guarantee that rates would be lowered if they should succeed in reducing the cost of stowing cotton. There is no guarantee that any and all advantage that might accrue would not merely go towards increasing the through business which leaves but little in the way of profit here, at the expense of the local export trade, which furnishes a living to so many people and which has for years been notoriously discriminated against.

Just why the proposition of the Stevedores to handle cotton at 18 cents per bale, which the manager of the Illinois Central Railroad admits would put this port on a parity with Galveston, was rejected, it is impossible to understand. It had the merit certainly of putting the labor of handling cotton on a piece basis as far as the ships are concerned, and would have done away with the objectionable system of limiting the number of bales in a day's work so much complained against.

Every day additional that the strike continues that much additional business is being driven away. We have already lost in profits, wages and commerce, present and prospective, more than can possibly be recovered during the whole three years that the labor contracts are expected to run. The idea entertained by some that the carrying of the present struggle to the limit of exhaustion will settle the labor question on the levee for all time is utterly fallacious, as proven by the history of all labor movements both here and elsewhere. Much more is to be gained by a reasonable and just compromise than by the wearing-out process, no matter which side is ultimately victorious, as in the former case traffic would be resumed with a friendly feeling existing, whereas in the latter case a sense of injury and resentment will remain to complicate the relations that should properly prevail between employers and the labor connected with the port.