

THE STRIKE MUST BE SETTLED.

Elsewhere in this morning's issue the *Pleayune* publishes a very interesting review of the present levee strike by a correspondent, who points out clearly and explicitly the great injury that is being done to the city's trade by this unhappy controversy. The dispute between the ship agents on the one hand, and the Screwmen on the other, over the rate of pay for stowing cotton in ships, is a matter of comparative insignificance alongside of the tremendous loss in general trade which this community is suffering by the almost complete paralysis of its commerce for the past few weeks.

When the Mayor wrote to the Conference of the Commercial Exchanges on Friday last, urgently demanding that something be done to promptly end the situation, bring about a resumption of business, and then thoroughly investigate the whole matter of port charges as affecting competition with Galveston and other ports with a view to a general reform of all abuses and overcharges, he voiced the sentiments of the entire community, a fact which the Conference of Exchanges did not appear to fully realize. When the Conference required that the Screwmen go back to work on the basis of 200 bales hand-stowed per day as a condition precedent to a general investigation or arbitration commission in advance by deciding what it must decide on one very important phase of the problem to be submitted.

The *Pleayune* does not contend that in deciding that 200 bales per day was a proper day's work the Conference of Exchanges made a mistake, but it does contend that the decision in question has nothing whatever to do with the arbitration and investigation now proposed. Practically everybody is convinced that the high charges maintained at this port are throttling trade, and it is probably true, as claimed, that the Screwmen have been charging too much by reason of stowing less cotton than Galveston, but there is not a single person at all acquainted with conditions here who does not believe that there are many other interests connected with the port that are fattening on the overcharges practiced; it is even hinted that the Screwmen are by no means the worst offenders in this respect. If an impartial investigation shows that the Screwmen are demanding too much they will have to submit to a scaling down of their demands, but in like manner all other overcharges which the investigation develops must be also scaled down. It would not be fair to make labor alone bear the burden of placing the port on a proper competitive footing.

It is well to recall at this stage the fact that at a conference with the cotton factors, who are among the worst victims of this strike, the representatives of the Screwmen showed an earnest disposition to do what the necessities of the port might demand if an impartial investigation of all conditions and charges were made. It is also worth remembering that the Representatives of the striking unions, as soon as they heard of the letter written by the Mayor to the Conference of Exchanges, promptly offered to go to work at the old conditions pending a settlement. A temporary agreement relative to the labor of the Screwmen, pending the final adjudication of the arbitration, should not be difficult if it were understood that the real settlement when secured was to date from the day of the resumption of work.

The Steamship Agents and Stevedores appear to believe that in their controversy with the Screwmen they have the sympathy of the entire community with them. If they entertain such an opinion they are grievously in error. It is true that the people of New Orleans are in real earnest in their desire that their port should be placed on a competitive basis with Galveston and other Southern ports, but they are not willing that the whole sacrifice which must be made should be placed on the shoulders of a single class of labor, and all the other parasites that are fattening on the vitals of the port be permitted to escape. The time has come for a general and thorough investigation and for the lopping off of excrescences and overcharges until New Orleans is in a position to compete with any and all comers. As things are going since the strike New Orleans has merely become a way station for the interchange of through freight, all the real commerce of the port upon which the merchants and laboring people of the city depend having been totally neglected and set aside.

The community now demands that traffic of all sorts on the levee be immediately resumed, and that the whole problem of wages and charges be submitted to a fair and impartial committee of arbitration, whose decision all interests will be pledged in advance to accept.