

The Hurtfulness of Protection.

The (London) Nation (Lib.), August 8.—Perhaps the most valuable of the many powerful and original papers read at the Congress was contributed by Mr. Franklin Pierce, of the United States, who declared that the high tariff was the direct cause of the creation and maintenance of the 400 odd combinations in restraint of trade, and that the States in getting rid of the absolutist rule of George III, had only substituted government by oil kings and steel kings, whose system was, in its way, as oppressive as that of the Czar. Controlling politics through their contributions to the campaign funds of the parties—the great manufacturers subscribed five million dollars to the Republican funds in the contest of 1896—the trusts in return exact from Republican politicians the most rigid adherence to their commercial interests; while their influence on American life hopelessly materializes it. Mr. Ehrich* pointed out that 300,000 freight cars were lying idle in the States, even after the return of hundreds of thousands of laborers to Europe. Germany and the States, the two leading protectionist countries, had, he insisted, suffered most from the depression; England, the free trader, least. We observe that no attempt has been made in the British protectionist press to rebut the remarkable and, indeed, overwhelming testimony adduced at the Congress as to the multifold social oppression and the universal industrial depression accompanying protection.

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An English Interview with Lawson Purdy.

The Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury (Lib.), August 13.—The memorable Free Trade Congress of last week drew to London many distinguished men, with whom to converse was to be sure of information, and almost sure of newly acquired wisdom. One of these was Mr. Lawson Purdy, president of the New York Taxes and Assessments Commission. Taxes and assessments are puzzling things in this country, but certain fearless and far-seeing people have arrived at principles which it is good to find warranted by American experience. . . . The [Daily News] interviewer got from him that New York experience does not justify the English idea that land cannot be taxed apart from buildings. The practice of doing this is founded upon that of Massachusetts for the last fifty years. There are several cities besides Boston in which the value of land and the value of improvements on land have to be separately stated. New York has followed. Mr. Purdy holds it a fallacious principle to exempt land because it yields nothing. He holds that if any indulgence is shown it should be to the man who adds to the value of rateable land. Everyone knows that in this country the profit goes to the landlord, and the taxation of rentals is carried to an intolerable extreme, which many think has now almost reached its utmost endurable limit. The "two blades of grass" doctrine, Mr. Purdy points out, is all in favor of the improver, not of the owner. The New York change began in 1904, and occasioned great labor to the department. But there was no friction. The effect immediately appeared in the exemplary higher assessing of unimproved or badly improved sites. Every year the assessment is fairer, and the method is not to single out properties

*Mr. Louis R. Ehrich, of New York

penally but to fix unit values for unit lots. When this is done the assessment is a matter of mere mathematics.

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