

WHAT WILL CITY DO WITH WORKMEN IF CROWDED OUT

Accommodation Must be Provided or Overcrowding Must be Permitted.

CITY HAS LITTLE
OPTION IN MATTER

If Houses Were Available
Population Would Increase
by Thousands.

"How many people reside in the house," asked the Star yesterday afternoon of a citizen of the Sault when he descended from the steps of a west end residence after collecting his rent.

"The Lord only knows," replied the rent collector; "all I am concerned in is that I collect the rent. There's a whole lot though, and they are all steady fellows. I never counted them up. They take good care of the house and pay up regularly. That's about as far as I want to go," he continued when he saw the Star man taking notes. "Don't quote me as knocking the thing. I think the house is clean and all that, and the inhabitants behave themselves."

"You are unable to say just how many boarders occupy the rooms," asked the Star. From the appearance of the building the Star man inferred that it was a seven or eight roomed house, and that several of the rooms must necessarily be devoted to a kitchen, a bath room, and a dining room.

"To tell the truth I am unable to say," replied the landlord, "but don't quote me as saying anything. I think everything is conducted properly."

"How do you know?" asked the Star.

"Well, I am paid my rent regularly, and I have not been asked to make repairs. To tell you the truth I have not entered the house for some months."

The Star man stuck around and noticed fifteen men going into the house between five and six o'clock, and at the same time a number of others with dinner pails coming out. It was inferred that the beds in the house were kept warm 24 hours during the day, and that, like a number of industries, they boasted of a night and day shift.

Should these things be? The Sault has plenty of room to grow, and why then should overcrowding, which practically results in isolation hospitals and sanitary inspectors, exist?

When Sault Ste. Marie received its charter as a city it was understood that it was one of the cleanest and most desirable locations from the residential standpoint in the Dominion. Simply because the air and water were pure, and that the city had plenty of room to grow. Land is available in any district, and many citizens have money and influence which might be developed to an alleviation of the evil. A difficulty which now confronts the authorities is the elimination of overcrowding among the poorer classes, and in fact among the working classes who receive a wage which would permit them to be housed under better and more sanitary conditions. This matter has been taken up by philanthropic and other institutions and persons, but with what result? Where and how can the people who cause the overcrowding be housed?

The problem might be readily solved if some enterprising builder or syndicate would construct a couple of hundred working men's dwellings, as has been done in some other cities. At the present time they are not available, hence the necessity of the laborers herding together under conditions which do not add to their bank account and tend to the spread of disease, no matter what precautions are taken to prevent it. During the past two years seven or eight hundred private dwellings have been erected in the Sault and Steelton, and each one is now occupied, while others are looking for like accommodation. As a rule the new dwelling houses are snapped up by citizens of the middle or better class, leaving the workman out in the cold. He cannot afford to pay a fancy price for rent, and much less afford an outlay, however modest, for the purchase of a dwelling outright. Many of those employed in our local industries would like to bring their families from other lands, but in this the newcomers have to meet the conditions which our present citizens have to contend with.

At the present time in the Sault and Steelton for every vacant house there are at least a dozen or score of applicants, but the rents, as stated above, are somewhat high for the day laborer, and in some instances are above the reach of those who live in overcrowded dwellings. For the Chinese, of course, there is no need for sympathy, as their tendency is to crowd under the most favorable cir-

circumstances. It remains for the inspectors of the government to make them adhere to necessary conditions. They make money enough to permit of their being housed properly and decently. Our concern is for those whose earnings vary, and which are never enough to pay the rents now demanded no matter what the location.

If private enterprise will not step in and build it might be desirable for the city council to put up a couple of hundred houses on property convenient to the street car line, or to industries where the men are employed, to meet the case. At the present time property is available throughout the city in a number of newly opened subdivisions. The city could always be sure of its rent by permitting the sanitary inspector to collect it. Upon his visits to the premises the inspector could look the premises over and pass upon their condition. Thus, according to the old saw, two birds could be killed with one stone.

This housing of the working classes is a subject which the Sault will have to face before long, because, as we add to our factories, industries and workshops we shall be adding also a class of laborers who cannot afford to pay the rent that skilled mechanics and office men can afford to pay. This class will by the way be a necessity, but they cannot be secured if they cannot secure house room. Many of these men have families which they would not place in a boarding house such as that mentioned above, where the patrons change daily and where no privacy is permissible even if such were attempted.

The construction of a number of dwellings at a convenient spot, as suggested above, would undoubtedly be found a sound investment, though not as great perhaps as the more substantial and attractive dwellings which cost more to build by the way. At all events this will have to be supplied, and that in the not distant future. The people who are driven out of overcrowded dwellings should not be driven out of the city.

And at the same time the city objects to overcrowding.

If many workmen of the city were householders, as they would like to be, the population of Sault Ste. Marie would increase several thousands within the next few months. Who will supply the homes?