

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 20, 1888.

THE CUSTOMS DIFFICULTY.

The investigation made by the Winnipeg board of trade, regarding the refusal of the customs authorities to sanction the shipment of grain from Manitoba via the Northern Pacific Railway, pretty effectually disposes of the contentions of the Minister of Customs, at Ottawa, in connection therewith. This matter has been referred to in these columns on previous occasions, but in order that our readers at a distance may clearly understand the nature of the difficulty, it will perhaps be advisable to preface remarks by a few explanatory notes.

During last fall a branch of the Northern Pacific Railway was completed to the Manitoba boundary at West Lynne, with the object of connecting with the Red River Valley Railway. The failure to complete the latter road of course prevented the Northern Pacific from being any great service to the Province this season. Still it was thought grain grown in the district around West Lynne and Emerson could be shipped by the Northern Pacific, and thus have the advantage of competition in freights. Grain so shipped would have to go through in bond or be subject to duty on entering the United States, and again on re-entering Canada.

In due course of time applications were made by grain shippers to the customs authorities for the usual certificates to enable them to ship grain in bond via the Northern Pacific to Ontario. These applications were refused, and although correspondence was carried on with Ottawa in the matter, the customs authorities remained firm in their dog-in-the-manger policy. Thus in the face of a most severe grain blockade all over the Province, grain shippers at the points named were prevented from availing themselves of the facilities and lower rates offered by the Northern Pacific Railway, though that road was completed to the boundary right at their doors. Just across the boundary, in the United States, wheat was bringing six to ten cents more per bushel than could be paid on this side of the line, owing to the competition there enjoyed, yet by the arbitrary policy of the Dominion authorities, Canadian shippers were pre-

vented from availing themselves of the competition offered.

This briefly explains the situation. Now for the other side of the question. The Canadian Minister of Customs at Ottawa declares that it would be entirely foreign to the bonding system to certify to wheat loaded in cars in the United States. He goes further and states that it was impossible to give certificates necessary to bond the wheat through to Ontario, when it had to be loaded into the cars in the United States. These are the only excuses offered, which it will be seen are merely equivocations, and actually untrue by the following facts:—

Up to the year 1880, and previous to the construction of the railway into Manitoba via Emerson, grain was shipped yearly from Manitoba, loaded in cars in the United States, and taken through to eastern Canada in bond. The only difference between the shipments made previous to 1880, and the present case is, that whereas the grain was then loaded in cars many miles from the Canadian boundary, now the cars would be loaded right at the boundary. In the case of these former shipments the grain was loaded into barges in sacks and taken up the Red River and into the United States territory, a distance of over 100 miles, before it was placed in the cars. In the present case, the grain would be loaded in the cars within a few rods of a Canadian customs house and under the supervision of a Canadian customs officer. So far as the United States customs are concerned, there would be no trouble whatever about bonding the wheat, the Winnipeg board of trade having received the most positive assurance that the customs officials on the other side of the line would do everything in their power to facilitate such shipments, and that there was nothing connected therewith to interfere in any way with the United States customs regulations.

PART OF THE POLICY.

Another article in this issue deals with the customs difficulty regarding the shipment of wheat from Manitoba via the Northern Pacific R'y. A little investigation has placed this matter in its true light and made it clear that the whole affair is only in keeping with the narrow-minded policy of the Dominion Government, in discriminating against everything in the interests of the O. P. Railway. The refusal to sanction the shipment of

grain in this way is another direct discrimination against the interests of Manitoba, in aid of railway monopoly, and it shows to what small things the Government will stoop, to enforce that policy in every particular. Although there is double the grain in the country that the O. P. R. has shown itself competent to handle, yet the shipment of a few cars of wheat from the Emerson market, via the Northern Pacific, is blocked by an arbitrary and unfriendly line of action on the part of the Canadian customs authorities.

How strangely is this policy of the Dominion Government in comparison with that of the Government of the United States. The C. P. R. corporation has received nothing but the most friendly treatment from the United States, and its large traffic drawn from the United States has been in every way facilitated by the government of that country. In return for such friendly treatment, the Dominion steps in to block the shipment of a few cars of wheat by a United States road. Through the sufferance of the American authorities, the C. P. R. has been allowed to compete actively for the traffic of American railways, and especially to compete against the Northern Pacific railway, whilst the latter is prevented in every possible way from participating in Canadian traffic. The Canadian road, built with public funds, is shown every favor in the United States, whilst the Northern Pacific is blocked out of Canada.

It was long ago urged that the narrow-minded policy of disallowance and trade exclusiveness, worthy of a Chinese government of a century ago, and forced upon Western Canada by the Dominion, was in danger of jeopardizing international relationship with the United States. Though disallowance was actually used to prevent the construction of railways in Manitoba, which had received a charter from the Manitoba Legislature, yet practically it meant the blocking of United States roads out of Western Canada. Such a policy is certainly unfriendly towards the United States, in view of the friendly treatment accorded Canadian roads in that country. This still more arbitrary move of refusing to grant customs facilities to ship wheat via the Northern Pacific, is another very unfriendly act towards a United States railway.

It is therefore no wonder that attention at Washington has been drawn to-