

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, AUGUST 8, 1892.

THE CANAL TOLLS' DIFFICULTY.

The dispute between this country and the United States regarding the Welland canal tolls, is one of intense interest to Western Canada. Should the threat of retaliation from Washington be put in force, the blow would fall upon the West. At the time of writing no further development has occurred in the matter, and it is to be hoped that some amicable termination of the difficulty may be arrived at. Our government should, we think, take a liberal view of the question. Though Canada has kept the letter of the treaty, there really does appear to be some violation of the spirit of the obligation, in our present regulations. A rebate in the canal charges of 18 cents per ton, is given on grain carried through to Montreal, while this is not granted in the case of cargoes transhipped at United States ports. True, United States vessels are given the rebate on going through to Montreal, the same as Canadian vessels, but there remains the discrimination against United States ports in favor of the Canadian port. The treaty calls for the same treatment to the vessels of either country in the use of the canals, and this is certainly accorded by Canada; but the discrimination is against the United States' ports, and not against the shipping. Looking at it from the standpoint of United States' interests, it is not difficult to magnify the matter into an injustice on our part.

It is true that our canals are of much more value to the United States than their canals are to us. It is also true that Canada has been deprived of any practical value from the right to use the Erie canal, as we have been refused the privilege of navigating the Hudson river. The Erie canal is of no use to us without the Hudson river, and it seems a violation of the spirit of the treaty, on the part of the United States, to prevent our shipping from navigating the Hudson. It is still further true that the clauses of the Washington treaty most favorable to Canada have been abrogated at the instance of the United States. But notwithstanding that this country is giving a great deal more than she receives, we still think that our government should take a liberal view of the canal question. Probably the best plan would be to make the canals absolutely free to all.

The talk of reprisals and counter reprisals does not show wisdom. It is true that the United States has not acted neighborly with this country. The big republic could well afford to be generous with its young northern neighbor, but instead of that it has been small and mean in most international matters and openly hostile and aggressive in other ways, as for instance the Atlantic fisheries dispute, and the Bohring sea trouble. In its tariff legislation, etc., the republic has steadily pursued a policy of squeezing this country, notwithstanding that Canada is a large importer of United States' products. But with all these irritating matters in view, the policy of our people should be such as to give no reasonable ground for

complaint. Let Canada carry out all her obligations, not only to the letter, but also to the fullest extent in the spirit of the thing, with the hope that in time our southern neighbors will adopt the same friendly policy.

INSPECTION OF WHEAT.

The farmers of Manitoba have now taken up the question of the inspection of wheat. What with the discussion of this matter through boards of trade, grain exchanges, millers' associations and the farmers, etc., the question is likely to be thoroughly threshed out. Naturally there is a great diversity of opinion upon the question, which is viewed according to the particular interests of the different bodies discussing it. While the Ontario Millers' Association has raised a great hue and cry about the inspection being too high and the standards too low, the farmers make exactly the opposite complaints, to the effect that the standards are too high and the inspection too low. Between these opposing interests, the inspectors stand as the butt of each, and no matter how skilled their decisions may be, they will have to put up with considerable hard talk from all sides.

At a recent meeting of the Central Farmers' Institute of Manitoba, held at Brandon, a motion condemning the grading system, was introduced. No action was taken upon the motion, however, and it was held over for further information upon the question at issue. We do not see why the farmers should condemn the inspection of wheat, as it is certainly in their interest to have wheat officially inspected. The inspector is a government official, who stands between the buyer and seller, to do justice to all. Quite a number of farmers in Manitoba sell their wheat in car lots, and the privilege of having it inspected should be a great advantage to them, as otherwise they would be forced to sell upon sample. The sale and shipment of wheat upon sample, it is well known, is subject to many inconveniences and annoyances, which are avoided in selling on inspection. Sample sales leave the shipper at the mercy of the receiver. The latter can claim that the wheat is not up to sample and demand a rebate, which the shipper is often obliged to grant, an investigation of the case would amount to a serious cost. A dishonest buyer can make good use of the sample trade to gudge the shipper. When the wheat is sold on certificate of inspection, there is no coming back on the shipper for rebates on the claim that the wheat is not up to sample. In the latter case the inspector only is responsible, while the shipper is relieved of the probability of a claim for rebate. Farmers who sell their wheat in car lots, can still sell on sample, if they think the inspection is too low. There is nothing compulsory about using the inspector's certificate, if a better sample sale can be made.

While writing on this subject, it may be remarked that the Manitoba farmers' institute has asked for representation on the grain standards board. This is a very reasonable request, and one which we understand will be granted by the government. The farmers, who are the producers of the grain, and therefore very largely interested in the matter of inspection, seem to be fairly entitled to a hand in the fixing of the grain standards.

AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION IN THE UNITED STATES.

A committee of the house of representatives has been investigating the effect of tariff legislation upon agriculture. At the outset we may say that the Democrats have a majority in the house, and a somewhat adverse report may therefore be looked for; but allowing for this, the committee submit evidence to prove that the farmers of the republic have been losing ground steadily. The figures presented, indeed, show a serious state of depression among the farmers of the United States.

The report says that "facts and statistics collected show a steady decline in the prices of farm property and farm products under the several tariffs in force since the war. Though other interests were prospering under the low tariff law of 1846, the report says that agriculture then enjoyed its greatest prosperity. The report gives a table showing a decrease of \$355,586,795 in value of farm lands from 1870 to 1880, and a decrease of \$175,876,104 in the value of farm products for a period of eighteen years from 1870 to 1888. A comparative table is given showing a large increase in volume and profit of the banking and railroad business. Other statistics are given to show that while the crops have increased in volume the depression in prices has stripped the business of all profit. Touching upon the price of wool, the report contends that the tariff imposed upon imports has been of no practical benefit to the consumer, and this is also true, the report says, in all other products upon which an import duty has been imposed."

"The Republican reciprocity programme is vigorously attacked by the report, which characterizes it as being the flimsiest and boldest attempt to deceive the farmers. Nearly all the South American countries being agricultural in their nature, the local supply, the report says, is fully equal to the demand, and any reciprocal interchange with them could not prove of advantage to American farmers. The farmer, therefore, is obliged to practice most rigid economy to clothe his family and pay the interest on his mortgaged home. In conclusion the committee say that the present tariff law is most unjust and if persisted in will prove ruinous to the greatest of all interest—agriculture. Representative White, of Iowa, adds a supplement to the report, showing that live stock interests have declined on account of the tariff."

LOSS FROM HOLDING WHEAT.

The loss which the farmers of Manitoba have sustained on last year's wheat crop, through holding for higher prices, will never be known. That the loss has been enormous, is certain, but to even approximately estimate it is impossible. Last fall the country was full of bulls, and everybody predicted high prices for wheat. The farmers were misled and many of them held for the high prices, which never came. During a considerable portion of the fall and winter, very fair prices were paid in Manitoba country markets for wheat. At times the prices paid to farmers here were in excess of export values, but this did not pre-