

COMMERCIAL article in full, and also has the following editorial of its own upon this subject:—

A manifest injustice has been done to Manitoba and the Northwest territories, by the wholesale doleful way of public lands to subsidize projected railways. A timely article which appears in the last issue of our interesting contemporary, the *Winnipeg Commercial*, enters a very vigorous protest against the policy of the Dominion government in this respect, a protest which well deserves the space we have found for it elsewhere. The return referred to as having been brought down at Ottawa within the week, showing that 42,000,000 acres of land in Manitoba and the territories have been thus granted to railways to date, has escaped our observation; but taking the figures as approximately correct, the increase within the past year is so remarkable that no terms should be considered too strong in which to denounce the injustice. Statistics make it appear that up to the end of the fiscal year 1890, grants of land made to eighteen companies in Manitoba and the Northwest territories amounted to 24,425,333 acres, of which quantity 81,058 acres had then been patented. The average grant was 6,400 acres per mile, and the estimated number of miles subsidized was 3,289. Since June 30, 1890, therefore, if the figures of our contemporary are correct, no less than 18,500,000 acres, approximately, have been thus withdrawn from free settlement. Surely the figures of 1890 at our hand are incomplete, or the 42,000,000 referred to include colonization company grants as well as railway subsidies. Estimated at \$3.57 per acre,—the present valuation placed on their unsold lands by the Canadian Pacific railway,—this vast amount of territory equals a money subsidy of \$149,940,000 contributed to entirely by the people of the Northwest. The figures may well make us pause. It is true that only a few paltry acres have as yet been patented, but equally true is it that the best lands of the Dominion have been tied up from settlement; retarding development where late events have shown the greatest heritage of Canada to lie. Fortunately there is yet time to remedy the threatened evil, and our contemporary well voices the sentiment of thinking minds in both the east and west when it says: "Not only should the custom of granting lands cease at once, but an effort should be made to repair some of the injury already done. In cases where corporations have not earned the lands granted them, they should be held strictly to the conditions upon which the grant has been given, and any failure to fulfill these conditions should result in every case in the forfeiture of the lands. If in some cases it might seem unduly harsh to deprive some corporation of a land grant, some equivalent subsidy might be given, but in every case the land grant should be forfeited. An effort should also be made to induce some of these corporations to relinquish their lands for some other consideration or concession. It would pay the government to buy back the lands rather than have such an evil inflicted upon the country."

Regarding the area of land granted to railways, the *Merchant's Magazine*, expresses some doubt. The official Year Book of Canada, for 1890, paragraph 558, says:—"Subsidies of Dominion lands, principally to lines in Manitoba and the Territories, have been granted at various times, amounting altogether to 46,499,433 acres."

The way in which the press has taken up this question, gives hope for the future. The journals which have devoted space to the discussion of this land question, are in every case the leading journals of eastern Canada. The western press does not seem to have awakened to the importance of the interest at stake. The discussion of the question in these journals

which have taken the matter up, should, however, impress the government with the necessity of giving immediate attention to its land policy. There are few, if any matters of greater importance concerning the future of this country, than this question concerning the public domain. The policy pursued now will tell for good or evil for generations to come.

### THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE.

Again the proposed conference at Washington, to consider commercial relations between Canada and the United States, has been postponed. The announcement that the conference has been postponed on account of the ill health of Secretary Blaine, may or may not represent all the reasons for the postponement. Mr. Blaine has been foremost in all the recent reciprocal negotiations which the United States has entered into, and it is quite natural that his presence would be desirable, if not absolutely necessary, in the proposed conference with Canadian representatives. Canadian opposition journals claim that the United States will never treat with the present Dominion Government, hence the postponement, in the hope of a political change in Canada. If this were true, it would look like an effort on the part of the republic, to embarrass our government, and cause a triumph for the party of unrestricted reciprocity. Any effort on the part of a foreign government, however, to influence our domestic affairs, should be resented. The frequent declaration coming from prominent United States politicians, that the republic would consider nothing short of complete reciprocity, or commercial union, would seem to give some color to the claims of the opposition press at home. The people of Canada have declared at the polls against the obnoxious commercial union proposals, and until there is a change of government, and a change of popular sentiment in this country, it would seem useless to go to Washington to talk about extending international commerce, if it be true, as claimed by some public men in the States, that they will consider only complete reciprocity with Canada. The latter of course means a high tariff compact between the two countries, which would be a very dishonorable policy for Canada, as well as an unsound one commercially. However, the conference, if it ever takes place, is to be merely an informal discussion, and if it does not lead to any important results, will not do any harm, while the commercial policy of this country remains as it is at present.

### Editorial Notes.

THE blockade of the Sault, through a collision and the wrecking of a barge in a narrow channel near the canal, has proved quite a serious matter. The channel was entirely blocked, and the passage of craft thereby prevented. It was reported it would take nearly a week to clear the channel to allow the passage of shipping. Coming at this season of the year, when there is such a rush to get grain out by the lake route, even a very few days of a blockade is a serious matter.

THE people of Victoria, B. C., were not satisfied with the showing of the city in the recent

census returns, and a new census of the place was taken under the direction of the city council, showing a population of over 25,000. The government census only gave the population of the city at 16,841. There is too great a discrepancy here to be accounted for by padding in the municipal census, though it may be perhaps granted that the latter is probably too high. It should now be in order for the government to order a new and careful census of the place, in order to substantiate or condemn its former figures. If the government cannot substantiate its figures, the whole work of the late census will be looked upon as very imperfect and misleading.

Though hogs seem scarce in Manitoba, and prices have ruled high for the past two years, a Brandon firm has managed to scare up a couple of car loads, for shipment to British Columbia. This shipment should indicate what a good thing Manitoba farmers have in raising hogs, when they can be bought for shipment, when prices are so high at home. The last two years Manitoba has hardly produced a sufficient number of hogs for home consumption as fresh pork, to say nothing of supplying the home demand for cured hog products. The latter commodity has been nearly all imported. This is not as it should be. Instead of importing, and paying freight, and duty upon the portion which comes from the United States, we should more than supply the home markets with fresh pork and cured products. A few years ago Manitoba gave promise of quite a flourishing industry in raising hogs, but the dry years of 1886 and 1889 nearly killed the industry, on account of the light crops of feed grains in those years. The farmers, we think, were too easily discouraged. The last two years there has been an abundance of feed suitable for hogs, and if the farmers had not killed off their hogs, there would have been big money in raising these animals since 1889.

It now appears that the Northwest Central railway, of Manitoba, is to be finished up and operated at once, that is, so far as the rails have been laid. This enterprise has been in the hands of political wire-pullers and schemers, and as a natural consequence it has been humbugged from the start. The enterprise has been used from the outset to feather the nests of these political schemers, but it is now claimed that the politicians have been thrown out, and that the road is in the hands of business men. The contractors have gone west to commence work, and it is said the road will be equipped and put in operation at once, so that the crops of the settlers along the route may be moved out. The Northwest Central is a striking example of a vicious policy. The fact that political schemers are able to get large grants from the government, was the feature which called this company into existence. The object in this as in many others of our western railway schemes, was to secure valuable aid to the enterprise from the government, which would give to the company a franchise which could be used for personal gain. The history of this road points out the necessity for caution in chartering companies, and shows the injury which may result from giving irresponsible schemers a valuable franchise.