

THE EARLY CLOSING OF STORES.

The question of the early closing of stores—a question which has frequently been discussed by The Commercial—has been prominently before the business men of Manitoba during the past few weeks. The Business Men's convention, recently held in Winnipeg, discussed the matter, and unanimously passed a resolution in favor of early closing. Meetings were also held in Winnipeg, at which the Winnipeg Ministerial association, the Winnipeg Retailers' association, and the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council were officially represented.

It is worthy of special note that the labor organizations of the city have taken an active part in assisting the early closing movement here. The principal argument advanced in favor of long hours for stores is, that it is necessary to keep open late to accommodate the working men. The presence of representative working men at the meetings, to advocate early closing, is a sufficient repudiation of the argument that stores must be kept open late to accommodate the working men.

Following the meetings held in the city, a large delegation, composed of representatives of the three organizations mentioned above, interviewed the law amendments committee of the provincial legislature, with the object of securing the extension of the law regarding early closing. The defects in the present law were pointed out, and some advocated an extension of the principle to such an extent as to provide a general compulsory, early closing law, to apply to the whole province, in place of the present local option law.

Following this delegation, another delegation waited upon the legislators, in opposition to early closing. The delegation which was composed mainly of Winnipeg auctioneers, opposed the inclusion of the auctioneers in any early closing law. A meeting composed mainly of second-hand dealers and other small dealers, mostly of Israelitish extraction, was also held, to oppose early closing, on general principles.

With these conflicting interests, it will be difficult for the legislature to decide what to do in the matter. It is doubtful if the legislature will undertake the responsibility of passing a general provincial act, in the absence of any direct expression in favor of the same from provincial towns. The resolution passed at the business convention would show that merchants throughout the country are in favor of early closing, but that was a general resolution. The question of legislation was not discussed at the convention, and it is perhaps a matter for regret that this was not the case. If it is decided to have another business convention at some future date, the question of extending the scope of the law in the matter of early closing, might be discussed to advantage. At any rate, if the matter is to be followed up, some effort should be made to secure the opinion of provincial merchants upon this question.

The present local option, early closing law has not proved as satisfactory as could have been desired. Early closing has made considerable progress in Winnipeg and elsewhere in Manitoba since the act was passed, but

perhaps the moral influence of the act has been as much the cause of this as its direct practical usefulness in securing early closing. The fact that there was in existence a law favorable to early closing, has no doubt been a great encouragement to those favorable to early closing to persist in their efforts in that direction.

In Winnipeg many difficulties have been experienced in carrying the law into effect, and sufficient experience has now been gained to show what amendments are required to make the law fairly effective. If the legislature will not pass a provincial compulsory law, it is certainly expected that the present law will be very materially improved, during the present session of the legislature.

The application of the law to auctioneers is a difficult matter to handle. If retail merchants are compelled to close at a given hour, under this act, where it has been brought into force, it does seem unfair that auctioneers should be allowed to open stores after these hours, for the disposal by auction of goods similar to those sold in the stores. This would submit the stores, which were compelled to close, to unfair competition, and would render it very difficult to enforce the law. If exception is to be made in favor of the auctioneers, it will no doubt have the effect of securing the abolition of the early closing by-laws now in force in Winnipeg, thus destroying all the work that has been done in the interest of early closing in this city.

A TALE OF TWO CRIMES.

In the Winnipeg police court the other day, a poor half-breed, who had imbibed a little too freely, was sentenced to one month's imprisonment for throwing his arms around a young lady, whom he met on the street. In this case there was no malice or evil intention, and no harm was done to any one. It was merely a careless act brought about by exuberance of spirits. It cost practically nothing to prosecute the case.

At the assize court at Winnipeg, a few days previous to this event, a Winnipeg merchant was sentenced to pay a trifling fine, or in default one month's imprisonment, for a swindling transaction amounting to several thousand dollars. In the latter case there was a deliberately planned swindle, and the public and private law expenses in connection with this man's swindling operations amounted to about \$2,000. Gaze on this picture, and on this.

Winnipeg Board of Trade.

The council of the Winnipeg board of trade held a special meeting on Tuesday afternoon.

A committee consisting of D. W. Bole, J. H. Ashdown and F. H. Mathewson, reported that it had waited on the attorney-general, and urged on his attention the several resolutions passed at the business men's convention relating to cheaper collection of small debts, the auditing of municipal and school board books, and the assessment of stocks and merchandise, and that the attorney-general was considering the resolutions in connection with proposed changes in the law.

Answers were received acknowledging the receipt of resolutions forwarded from the

business men's convention from Hon. C. Sifton, the minister of agriculture, the postmaster-general, the secretary of state, the comptroller of inland revenue, Hon. Mr. Haultain, and Sir William Van Horne.

Letters were also read from Hon. Hugh J. Macdonald, J. A. Macdonnell, M. P., R. L. Richardson, M. P., Dr. Roche, M. P., and Hon. C. Sifton, assuring the board of their support in the matter of securing improvements to Red river navigation, and from the minister of public works, informing the board that it would soon be made acquainted with what had been done in connection with the proposed improvements of the rapids.

A letter was read from the minister of agriculture, assuring the board that he had the matter of their request for the establishment of an experimental farm in the Red river valley under his consideration.

A communication was received from the board of trade of Toronto asking co-operation in desired amendments to the Dominion bankruptcy laws.

A committee consisting of Messrs. D. W. Bole, S. A. D. Bertrand, William George, G. F. Galt and J. H. Ashdown, was appointed to review the old insolvency legislation bills presented to the house and senate, and three years ago, together with recommendations for changes in the drafts determined on by the board at those dates, and to report to the council as soon as possible.

The secretary reported that amongst matters on which information was sought from the board since its last meeting were regarding Assiniboine water power, proposals for the establishment of a board of trade at Selkirk, cheaper collection of small debts, the sale in Manitoba of nitrate of soda, the working of cold storage companies in Winnipeg, and requests for samples of the grain standards from Virden, Man., Victoria, B. C., and Sydney, N. S. W.

The board has been placed in possession of a complete set of the N. W. T. ordinances and issues of the Official Gazette.

B. S. Jenkins, superintendent of Canadian Pacific telegraphs, states that important improvements are to be made to the company's telegraphic system during the coming summer. It has been decided, owing to the increased business, to add additional wires to the company's lines on the western division. New wires will be strung from Winnipeg eastward to Fort William; from Winnipeg westward on the main line, and southwest to the Pembina branch.

A noted collection of names appears in the table of contents of the March "Canadian Magazine." J. Macdonald, Alex. and Helen Sullivan contribute bright illustrated stories. Hon. J. W. Longley writes on the heading, "What Shall the Tariff Be?" and inveighs strongly against trusts and special privileges. David Christie Murray writes about George Meredith and Hall in a most interesting and chatty way. A story of moose-hunting in New Brunswick will delight the hearts of the sportsmen who have had or desire to have similar experiences. The frontispiece is a full-page picture of a stalwart Canadian moose, reproduced from a painting by J. E. Laughlin. In the literary point of view there are several articles of importance, including contributions by Professor Clark, of Trinity college, T. G. Marquis, Professor Huntingford, Rev. J. O. Miller. James Lawler writes about Manitoba university, and the article is accompanied by a number of photographs. A. H. U. Colquhoun tells of "Recent Trips to Washington;" William Ham gives a brief history of "London's Iron Tower;" while Mrs. J. D. Elger gives a Page from the Early History of New Zealand."