

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, MARCH 17, 1885.

## MANITOBA BRANCH RAILWAYS.

This is the season of the year, when we hear most about the grievance of Manitoba, as it is also the season for legislation, when the opportunity is open for our Dominion Parliament to redress our wrongs if they are desirous of so doing. Only the political bigot can assert, that Manitoba has not to bear an unjustly heavy proportion of Dominion taxation, and that the national protective policy as it is at present arranged, is not oppressive in its affects upon this province. That the C.P.R. monopoly has the effect of stunting our growth and development as a province, there are few but will admit, while the withholding of our lands from us, a privilege possessed by every other province of Canada is certainly a reason for dissatisfaction. There are other evils which call loudly for redress, and are more or less felt by our struggling settlers, but all sink into insignificance when compared with the one greatest of all grievance, namely want of railway facilities throughout the province. We may for a time suffer under a tariff system, which requires readjustment in its almost every detail before we receive justice: We may continue under the grasp of a railway monopoly, which is a huge load to carry; and we may even allow our lands and other resources to be administered, or rather squandered by an Ottawa Government, whose main objects are to retain power, and find pay for its supporters and parasites, and yet the resources within our boundaries, and the energy and enterprise of our people are such, that we can reach prosperity under all these burdens, could we only secure the necessary branch railways throughout the province to keep pace with the work of development and progress now going on. But Manitoba is bound hand and foot in this respect, and has not the power to help herself, without assuming burdens, which ought to be borne by the Dominion. The Manitoba Southwestern railway, which was at one time the hope of the people of this province, is now firmly in the grasp of C.P.R. monopolists, thanks to the political juggling of the present Ottawa Government; and yet that omniferous corporation that is ever tugging with robber-like pertinacity

and impudence at the Dominion purse, is not prepared to extend the road they thus hold a single mile during the coming summer, as we are credibly informed, although for three years a thickly settled and rich country has been awaiting its extension. The C.P.R. Co., can evidently demand and receive any assistance it asks for its useless work of bridging and tunnelling through ridges of mountains and hundreds of miles of rocky barren waste, but they neither ask nor receive assistance in constructing one hundred miles of line through a rich country where thousands of settlers await it, and have for years been deluded by empty promises of its construction. The C.P.R. Company, are content to play "Dog in the Manger", in connection with the Southwestern, and evidently our Paternal Government at Ottawa are prepared to assist them in so doing.

Such is the prospect in connection with railway extension through the southern portion of Manitoba, and if we turn our eyes northward we find very little more reason for hope. The Manitoba Northwestern Railway Company, are making praiseworthy struggles to extend their road 50 miles during the coming summer, but when we take into consideration the stringent state of eastern and European money markets, and the fact, that the M.N.W. is not a protege of the present Dominion Government, and is not allowed to touch the Dominion purse strings, we have good reason to doubt whether the company will be able to carry out their intention however anxious they may be in the matter.

It is a foolish thing to follow the example of the hunted ostrich when trouble faces us, and in Manitoba we may as well squarely face what seems almost beyond a doubt, and that is, that as matters now stand, there is no prospect of a single mile of railway being constructed in this province during 1885. Having squarely faced this impending evil, our next duty is to look around and see if it can be averted. Providentially the means of averting this are within our reach, although they entail upon this province a sacrifice it should not be called upon to make. No help can be looked for from Ottawa, and nothing but more empty and valueless promises can be looked for from the C.P.R. Company. The province can help itself by pledging its credit for the extension of the two railways already stated. One hundred miles westward added to these

lines this year, would do more for Manitoba than all the tariff changes we will secure in a quarter of a century, and the cost of constructing these two hundred miles would scarcely exceed \$3,000,000. With our province guaranteeing four per cent. for ten years or even twenty years upon that amount of bonds divided equally with the two companies, there should be no difficulty in floating these bonds in European money markets, so that the work of construction can be pushed at once. The burden thus imposed upon the province would be but light, and the guarantee thus furnished should be as good as the Dominion can give on \$200,000,000 which its total debt now reaches. But the province need not be called upon to pay one dollar of this guaranteed interest, as both proposed extensions are into well settled portions of Manitoba, where a paying traffic awaits any lines constructed. A year ago people talked of guaranteeing \$20,000,000 for the construction of a railway to Hudson's Bay, and that now suggested, would not obligate the province much over one-seventh of this amount, and entail not one-tenth of the risk of having to pay the interest guaranteed. Besides both of the lines in question have large land grants unencumbered with payments to the Dominion, and with these they can furnish abundant security to keep the province safe. It does seem as if this was the only means left by which we may secure branch railway extension during the present year, and perhaps for a number of years to come, and there is no use in longer disguising the fact, that unless it is secured at once, Manitoba's hopes of prosperity are buried for years to come, and a decade hence, a wilderness will be here as a monument of the misrule of an over-ambitious Ottawa Government, and a greedy speculative Syndicate.

This question is well worthy of the serious consideration of Mr. Norquay and his colleagues during this session of the Local House. They have before them a question, which if courageously grappled with and well handled, may lay the foundation of Manitoba's rapid progress, and which if allowed to pass untouched, may be the last opportunity ever offered. As to the voice of the people upon such a question, there can scarcely be a doubt. The very life of the province depends upon the construction of branch railways without further delay.