

THE COMMERCIAL

A Journal of Commerce, Industry and Finance, especially devoted to the interests of Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. By a thorough system of personal solicitation, carried out annually, this journal has been placed upon the desks of the majority of business men in the district designated above, including Northwest Ontario, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia, and the Territories of Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, JUNE 21, 1897.

CROW'S NEST AGREEMENT.

Last week The Commercial dealt briefly with the alleged terms of the agreement made between the government and the Canadian Pacific Railway company, for the construction of the Crow's Nest Railway. We then pointed out that any reduction in freight rates, to be of great importance to the West, must include the through lake and rail rate, or rates from Fort William westward, or from western points to Fort William. The actual terms have since been published. They also were given in The Commercial of last week, but came to hand after the portion of the paper containing the editorial comments, had been printed. The terms show that the reductions in freight rates are to apply to traffic west of Fort William, and in this respect the agreement has been received with satisfaction by the business men of the city. A reduction in through, all rail rates could only cover a small portion of the traffic, as the great bulk of the traffic is handled by lake and rail. As the reductions cover traffic to and from Fort William to western points, it will cover lake and rail business. The reduction in freights cover fruits, coal oil, cordage and binder twine, implements, heavy hardware of several classes, building material, paints, oils, furniture, etc. The reduction in grain and flour will also amount to a big saving in the aggregate.

There are some points in the agreement, however, upon which further

light is necessary. While the business men of Winnipeg feel moderately safe regarding the safeguarding of their interests under clause C, it is felt that the actual meaning of this clause should be more thoroughly defined before the agreement is ratified. The business men of Winnipeg do not ask for any special favors in the matter. They simply wish to have their interests securely safeguarded. They desire that the trade of their city shall be guaranteed such rates in connection with the construction of the Crow's Nest road, as its commercial and geographical position entitles it to. They do not ask for discriminating rates in their favor; but they ask that their shall not be any discrimination against this city. Mr. Ashdown, who has gone to Ottawa to study the agreement with the assurance of such additional information as will be available to him there, has been requested by the Winnipeg Board of Trade to give particular attention to this point. Clause C apparently gives the government authority to revise the rates; but it is the desire of the trade here than any possibility of discrimination against the city should be completely guarded against.

So far as this commercial centre is concerned, the question of discrimination is a great point. Placed on the same basis as other markets, the jobbers of the city feel that they will be able to obtain a fair share of the trade of the Kootenay country. The new rates recently announced by the railways, place Winnipeg jobbers on a more favorable footing than formerly. The old rates practically shut Winnipeg out of the Kootenay trade in many commodities, owing to the fact that through rates from the East to British Columbia points were much lower than the combined rate from the East to Winnipeg and from Winnipeg to British Columbia. If the new rates are continued, they will be more satisfactory to the jobbing trade of the city.

While East Mr. Ashdown will take up several points regarding freight rates, in the interest of the Winnipeg Board of Trade and the business interests of the city generally, such as the question of discrimination against tramp boats landing cargoes at Fort William. It is also felt by the jobbers that the rate from Winnipeg to British Columbia points, on broken lots, is proportionately higher than the car lot rate. As the traffic in many commodities is largely in less than car lots, an equalizing of the rate on small lots to approach nearer the car lot rate, would be a great benefit to the city's jobbing trade.

The Crow's Nest agreement as a whole has been very favorably received

here, by the leading business men. Many of the jobbers, who are, of course, the largest shippers, have expressed themselves as pleased with the general terms of the agreement. While the idea of a government railway was very enticing in theory, it is felt that the construction and operation of the road by the Canadian Pacific Railway company, under proper restrictions, will best meet the practical requirements of the case.

COAL OIL.

The Ontario oil refiners are making a hard fight for increased protection, and they apparently have some of the alleged free trade papers on their side. Their main effort is directed to show what a bad thing it would be to allow the great Standard oil monopoly to control the country. Well, if the big monopoly can sell oil in the United States for about one-third to one-half the price charged in Canada, it would be a good thing for the Canadian consumer to let it in. Canadian refiners are not satisfied with a specific duty of five cents per gallon, and they want the clause in the new tariff permitting the importation of oil in tanks repealed. If the home industry cannot live with the enormous protection of five cents a gallon in its favor, it would probably be profitable even to buy out the home industry and have free oil, rather than continue such an enormous tax to keep the home industry bolstered up.

REVISING THE TARIFF.

The last tariff revision made by the late Conservative government introduced a great many changes in the direction of lower duties, some of which would have been very beneficial to consumers. Immediately there was a gathering of the protected interests at Ottawa, and when the tariff bill was finally passed, it was found that a great many of the concessions had been re-considered and cancelled. The tariff bill as adopted was only a shadow of the bill as first announced in the house. The new Liberal tariff measure has been treated in much the same way, though to a less extent, it is true. A large number of changes have been made from the original draft of the bill and nearly all these changes are in the direction of higher duties. There is also a noticeable tendency to return to specific duties. In some cases no doubt a specific duty can be made to best serve the requirements of the customs department, but as often applied they have been unfair and unreasonable. Where reductions have been made in the revised tariff list, they have been mainly in the interest