

# THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of Ontario west of the boundary of 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. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

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## PROJECTED RAILWAYS.

Some interest has been thrown into the railway situation in Manitoba by a notice appearing in the official Gazette to the effect that application will be made at the next session of the legislature for an act to authorize the construction of a number of railway lines. A glance at the accompanying map will show the lines which it is proposed to build under this charter. On paper, at least, the enterprise is a vast one, extending its ramifications to all parts of the province. Several connections running southward into the United States will be noticed. C. E. Hamilton, a St. Paul lawyer, is the applicant for the promoters, the latter remaining in the background for the present. The main interest in the matter here centres in the promoters. Who they are is the question. The Great Northern, the Northern Pacific and the Great Trunk are suggested as possible backers of the enterprise, but beyond that of the solicitor, no other name has been definitely associated with the proposed work. Mr. Hamilton says that eastern capitalists are behind the project, that they have abundant funds, and will enter upon the work of construction as soon as a charter is obtained. Further developments in connection with the proposed railway enterprise are awaited with interest. It is to be hoped that promoters of this enterprise are not preparing for a raid on the provincial treasury. Furthermore, if there is any understanding between them and the provincial government, it is to be hoped the people will be given a reasonable time to consider the situation. It has been the fashion in the past in Manitoba to enter into agreements between promoters and the government secret up to the last moment, and then rush them through before the public would have time to realize what was going on, as witness the Dauphin railway deal, and later the Canadian Northern agreement. If this latest scheme is a government measure in any form, the people should be given particulars at once.

There are at present employed over 2000 men on the river front, at Port Williams, which includes work on the coal dock, the sheds, the elevators and the construction of D and E elevators.

## GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS.

The idea of government railways seems to be gaining ground in Canada. Recently the contract was let for the first government railway in Ontario. Now we have Hon. A. G. Blair, federal minister of railways and canals, declaring his belief in government ownership of railways. Mr. Blair has recently made a tour of the West, and what he has seen and learned during this trip has evidently developed, or at least strengthened any views he may have held in favor of government railways. On his return to Ottawa he stated that there is "ample room for at least four more trunk lines in the West, right through to the Pacific coast." One of these, he says in effect, should be a government road, for which there would be "a great future." Such a road, it is asserted, is the one thing necessary to bring about the equalization of freight rates, which is necessary for the welfare of the West. Both political parties are evidently keeping the question of government ownership of railways in view, so as to be prepared to gain whatever advantage may be derived from the development of public opinion in favor of government railways.

people on their arrival in Canada, owing probably to the report current about the great persecution which they were subjected to in Russia, on account of their religious beliefs. It is quite possible that these reports of persecution were very much exaggerated. At any rate, if they cut up such antics in Russia as they have recently been displaying here, it is not to be wondered at that they were subjected to official restraint. The belief here that these Russian peasants were akin to our Quakers in their beliefs and mode of living also assisted in creating a favorable impression of them at the outset. They have, however, developed features quite different from the Quakers. It is ascertained that some of these beliefs have been adopted since their settlement in Canada. Certainly they came here from Russia wearing sheepskin coats, after the manner of the peasants of that country. Later they appear to have become extreme vegetarians. They not only refused to eat animal food, but they discarded all articles of clothing made from animal substances, such as leather boots, woolen and fur garments, etc. They even decided that it was a sin to use animals for any purpose, and they accordingly turned their horses, cattle, etc., loose, and began hauling



THE LATEST RAILWAY SCHEME.  
Proposed New System of Railways in Manitoba.

## THE DOUKHOBOR ARMY.

Western Canada has probably received more newspaper notoriety as a result of the remarkable movement among the people known as Doukhobors, than from any other cause since the Saskatchewan rebellion of 1885. Unfortunately the publicity given in each case is not of the kind calculated to be of much benefit to the country. Many people, however, who know little or nothing about Western Canada will be reading with interest about the peculiar antics of our Doukhobors, and wondering what sort of a people they are and what sort of a country they are in. This movement among the Doukhobors is certainly one of the most remarkable of the kind that has occurred in modern times. It certainly presents a most interesting study of one phase of human nature.

The Doukhobors are about the newest element of our population. Their settlement in this country dates back only a few years. They came here from Russia. In that country they are understood to have isolated themselves from the rest of the population, and to have held views somewhat akin to the English-speaking people known as Quakers. Quite a fuss was made over these

their wagons themselves and doing all labor by hand. From reports received from time to time it appears that these peculiar people have been going from one extreme to another, and this has culminated in the remarkable movement which has now drawn to them the attention of the civilized world. Whole communities of them appear to have become religiously demented, and led by a few men who have acquired a wonderful influence over them, they have deserted their homes in a body and started out on a tramp in a southeasterly direction, without food or proper clothing. This movement has started right in the face of winter. Women and children were taken along, and even the sick were carried with them on stretchers. On arriving at the first town in the course of their march, the women and children were forcibly detained and housed and fed, but the men were allowed to go on. Where they wish to go they do not seem to know.

Altogether it is a most peculiar movement, and it seems almost beyond belief that entire communities of human beings could be led away from all judgment and reason in this fashion. The settlements affected are, mostly in the district about Yorkton,

Assiniboia territory. There are settlements of these people in other parts of the country which are not affected with this mania. So general is the dementia that in the Yorkton district there were only a half dozen or so people left in some of the settlements.

In addition to the peculiarities mentioned, it may be stated that the Doukhobors have refused to enter the lands on which they are located, as they declare that it would be a sin to recognize any human authority or government.

This remarkable situation in connection with the Doukhobors brings the whole question of immigration up for consideration. Evidently a serious blunder was made when these people were induced to come to this country. It was known at least that there were a peculiar people, before they were brought here, and this should have led to a careful investigation of their case before they were induced to come. They certainly would not have come here if they had not been given assistance and offered inducements. People with peculiarities as a general rule are good people to leave alone. The fact that they refuse to bear arms was one of their known peculiarities before they left Russia. Should we encourage people to come here who refuse to take upon themselves the duties of citizenship?

The Ruthenians, or Galicians, who began to come here from Austria about the same time as the Doukhobors arrived, were not received with nearly as much favor as the latter. It is a queer lot yet if the Ruthenians as a body are a desirable class. Certainly they have figured conspicuously in the criminal record of the country, in comparison with their numbers. They will, however, undoubtedly make better settlers than these peculiar Russian peasants. They will in time become assimilated, as they have no special peculiarities as a class to keep them separate. They have more individuality—more ambition than the Doukhobors. If they are not allowed to congregate together in too large numbers, they will undoubtedly become Canadianized in a few generations. Care, however, should be taken to scatter these people in small colonies. Already too many have been allowed to congregate in some settlements.

The community system in which the Doukhobor lives is not calculated to develop much ambition. If these people are lacking in individuality is shown by the way whole communities have been led away by a few fanatical or religiously demented persons. They could never prosper, particularly in a northern climate, unless clinging to the extreme vegetarian doctrines which they profess to believe. If any country is willing to take them, it would be probably the best thing they could do to assist them to get there as early as possible.

This Doukhobor episode should teach us a lesson that greater care is necessary in the direction of our immigration work. It is time that the quality, rather than the quantity, should be the foremost consideration. A little investigation beforehand would probably have shown that the Doukhobors were not the right kind of material to bring to this country. Fortunately, however, our Doukhobor population is not very great.

The announcement made by Sir William Mulock that the postoffice department has fixed the postage rate for the first time in its history, a surplus, is gratifying, particularly in view of the reduction in letter postage rates from 5 to 2 cents.