

THE COMMERCIAL

A Journal of Commerce, Industry, Finance and Insurance, 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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Office: 181 McDermot Street.

D. W. BUCHANAN,
Publisher.

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.

WINNIPEG, MARCH 12, 1898.

STATUTE LABOR.

Manitoba municipalities are now sending out notices of statute labor requirements for the current year. Two or three progressive municipalities have abandoned this wasteful plan of road improvements, but the great majority still hold to this old and miserable custom of statute labor. This statute labor is generally carried out in largely a loss of labor. It is simply a plan for putting in time to the least possible advantage. If one half the amount were expended in cash under efficient and systematic direction, the result would be vastly greater.

THE STIKINE ROUTE.

The Edmonton board of trade has issued a lengthy circular "to the people and press of Canada," dealing with the Stikine route railway contract, and the question of routes to the Yukon. The circular attacks the contract very vigorously. There are some good points in the circular, particularly the objections to granting land in aid of the proposed railway. The Commercial has always strongly opposed grants of land under any consideration. At the same time, it is very doubtful if any good can be accomplished by the publication of this circular. The Stikine route railway question has now degenerated into the position of a straight party fight, and it will be carried through on this basis. Aside from the question of the

contract, The Commercial cannot see that it is necessary to oppose the Stikine route in order to advocate an interior route.

OUR LEAD INDUSTRY.

The editor of the Kootenayan is publishing a series of articles on lead mining in British Columbia. He points out that owing to the high tariff charged on lead going into the United States, we cannot ship lead to that country, and at present we have no market at home, consequently the smelting of lead ores is out of the question. The duty on lead ores going into the United States is lower than on the lead, and at present the ores of the Kootenay mines are shipped to the United States for smelting first and afterwards for sale. But even on this basis the lower grade mines cannot be profitably worked, while the presence of silver permits the working of the higher grade ores for shipment to the United States on a profitable basis.

The Kootenayan claims that the home market is not available "because of our low duty on lead and lead products, which admits foreign lead and lead manufactures comparatively free." The Kootenayan thinks we should advance the duty to such an extent as to shut out foreign lead. Following up this line it says:

"The question naturally follows: Can Canada consume the product of her lead mines? The official statistics given out by the department of Trade and Commerce show the consumption of lead in bar, sheet, white lead and lead manufactures to be about 25,000 tons per annum. The lead output of Canada for the year 1897 was approximately 18,000 tons, 7,000 tons short of the consumption. It is true that the establishment of factories to supply the demand for lead products would require time, but there is already a Canadian market for 8,000 tons of pig lead, none of which is now supplied by Canadian mines, and the comparatively easy establishment of corrodng works would make a market for 6,000 tons more for the manufacture of lead paints. On the immediate or any future surplus we would be at no great disadvantage, so far as the United States market is concerned, than we are at the present time. Eighty per cent of the output could be almost immediately utilized in Canada."

The Commercial is not prepared to advocate this proposed increase in the duty on lead. It involves a very serious question and one which should be very carefully looked into before any such advance is made. At the same time the great importance of doing everything within reason to secure the development of our mineral resources, makes the question one worthy of consideration. While, therefore, The Commercial is not in possession of sufficient information to lead to any definite conclusions, we present the matter for the consideration of those interested.

FORT WILLIAM.

THE COMMERCIAL VISITS THE ELEVATOR TOWN.

The "Elevator Town" it is often termed. It might with equal justice be called a railway town, a sawmill town, a lakeport town, for all of these are factors that are combining with the grain trade to build up a thriving industrial community. Fort William is thriving, and it is also very progressive. During the past year by-laws were passed authorizing the expenditure of money to establish an electric light plant and waterworks, both to be municipal property and to be operated by the town. This is not only progressive, it is eminently a wise move, for a young town to take steps to control the valuable public franchises for its own benefit, and not allow them to pass into the hands of any private individuals. The electric plant of Fort William has been installed, and temporarily the power for generating electric energy will be steam, but it is expected that in the near future, when Mr. Jennison's company for utilizing the water power of Kakabeka falls is in operation, that this will take the place of steam. The project referred to, of developing power from the falls has now passed the preliminary stage and it is presumed that the company now moving in the matter will soon establish a power which when transmitted to the town will create a small revolution. It is also expected that manufacturing interests will be attracted west by the same means.

The proposed waterworks system will be commenced the coming season. The source of supply will be the lake on the top of Mount McKay, from which water will be conducted down the mountain and under (or over) the river to supply the town. Sufficient quantity for all possible needs can be obtained and the elevation gives a most adequate pressure. In fact a more perfect natural reservoir could hardly be found. And the most prominent feature of the landscape near the town on the Kam, will also have an economic importance.

The three enormous storing and shipping grain elevators of the C. P. R. company will be somewhat cast into the shade by the steel storage plant now being erected for the company at the west end of the yards. This additional plant is required to meet the growing grain trade and the new storage system is expected to be a considerable advantage in saving and otherwise. A description in detail has already appeared in The Commercial. The enterprise of the C. P. R. is shown in thus preparing facilities for the better handling of the great staple product of the west.

To a westerner the town of Fort William is a peculiarly interesting place. It is interesting at the present for have we not almost a proprietary claim on those great elevators from which the town frequently gets an epithet? At least we have a very lively interest in the stream of golden grain that pours into and through those elevators and out again as boat after boat receives its precious cargo of more real worth than the wealth of Ind—(beg pardon, Klondike!)—Fort William is interesting to westerners, too, from its future possibilities. Already it is no dream that this town shall break a lance with Winnipeg in rivalry for the wholesale jobbing trade of the western empire. Already the