

# THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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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, SEPTEMBER 22.

## THE DUTY ON OATMEAL.

The deputation of oatmeal millers which waited upon the council of the board of trade last week to urge a renewal of the effort made in 1897 to secure from the Dominion government an equalization of the duties upon oats and oatmeal made out a strong case. The evidence advanced in 1897 in support of the request was recapitulated and it was further pointed out that under the present arrangement of duties the oatmeal milling industry of this province, and in fact of all Canada is being seriously crippled. Under present conditions the industry has been found to be unprofitable and mills are closing down. The fine new mill of the Oglivie company at Winnipeg has not been in operation for some time and it is believed will not be worked again until something is done in the way of adjusting the duties. Other Manitoba mills are in the same position. In Ontario the difficulty has not been felt so quickly or so acutely as here, but this year the mills in that province are said to have been hit pretty hard and about forty of them are now closed down.

The trouble in Manitoba is that there are not enough oats grown here to keep the mills running all the time and the duty on oats is so high that they cannot be brought in from the United States, which is our nearest source of supply, to compete with United States oatmeal, which is subject to a low rate of duty. The duty on oats is 10c per bushel, and it takes about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  bushels to make an 80 pound sack of oatmeal, while the duty on the latter is 20 per cent. or 22 to 22½c per sack. This makes a discrimination in favor of United States mills of about 100 per cent.

These facts were laid before the government in 1897, when the difficulty first appeared, but no action was taken for the reason that the government was afraid of offending the farmers if the duty on oats was lowered and afraid of the political consequences if the duty on the meal was raised, as they were pledged to reduce in duties. The obvious injustice of the tariff was therefore allowed to remain and a promising Canadian industry is being slowly strangled for purely political reasons.

All that the millers ask is that a simple act of justice be done. The present situation is a perfectly ridiculous one and has nothing whatever

to commend it to the intelligence of the people. United States industry is being favored at the expense of Canadian. The duty into that country is so high that there is not the slightest chance of Canadians securing any business there when they have oats to mill and they have to stand by and see their own markets in the hands of southern millers for several months each year. Representation will again be made by the Winnipeg board of trade to the government and it is hoped that this time the request for justice will not be made in vain.

## THE NEW GRAIN TRADE ACT.

A synopsis of the new Manitoba grain act is given in another part of this issue. This act is the embodiment of the recommendations made by the royal commission which investigated the grievances of western farmers as to the manner in which their grain products were being handled by the elevator men, railway companies and others. The commission, it will be remembered made a tour of the west nearly a year ago, taking evidence at all the leading grain centres and afterwards reported to parliament making a number of suggestions which have since been embodied in this statute. The commission's work was thorough and its conclusions clear cut and concise, covering all the vexed questions of elevator charges, dockage, flat warehouses, shortage of cars, etc. It performed the work given it by parliament in a manner which seems to have been satisfactory to all the interests concerned and did it in an expeditious and economical manner. The total cost to the country for travelling, keep, clerical assistance and salaries was less than \$14,000, which, considering the distance covered, the amount of time consumed and the amount of evidence taken was certainly a modest sum.

Probably the most important recommendation made was for the appointment of a warehouse commissioner and this official has been appointed and is already discharging the duties of his office. He has been given large powers under the provisions of the act and if he properly performs his work will do much towards smoothing out the differences between the farmer and elevator men. The farmer has also now the right to erect flat warehouses when it pleases him to do so and he is so protected in the use of these by clauses which should prevent any holding back of grain thereby blocking the warehouse. Shipment is made compulsory within a specified time, if the warehouse operator desires it. The object of this clause is not as some would have the farmer believe to harass him in the use of his flat warehouse, but to facilitate shipment from it and thus give all a chance to share in its use.

Another important feature of the new act is the provision exacting bonds from all grain dealers and elevator owners. This should give the grain producer more confidence in the integrity of the men with whom he is dealing, weed out the adventurers and irresponsible men and make those in the trade more circumspect in their dealings. In principle, of course, this provision seems hardly a fair one. The government might just as well compel the country store keeper who buys the farmers butter and eggs from him to give bonds. The principle would be the same. But there is no kicking being done by the responsible grain dealers of the country as they

feel that if it will reassure the farmer to know that the man he sells his wheat to is under bonds which may become forfeited if he cheats in his dealings.

It is hoped that the new order of things in the grain trade will have all the good effect it is intended to have. That the farmer, grain dealer, and railway man will learn to know that their interests are identical, that what injures one injures all and that confidence will be again restored. It is also hoped that those who have been most active in working up the feeling of the farmers against those who handle their grain will have the good sense to let the new regulations have a fair trial and that all criticism will be honest criticism prompted by a desire to promote the interests of the parties concerned, not to stir up class hatred and strife.

## THE MAIL ORDER NUISANCE.

As is usual about this time of the year, the west is being flooded just now with the catalogues and other literature of eastern departmental stores. The retail traders of the west have always had a grievance against these stores for stepping into the field in this way at the season of the year when there is a little extra money in circulation and the farmer has some cash with which to make purchases, and they are quite justified in feeling as they do about it. These departmental stores will sell only for cash, they never lift a hand to carry anybody over a bad year, and they only solicit business in this country when they know there will be a little ready money to be snapped up. The western retail merchant is called upon to supply consumers here with goods at all seasons, to supply them on credit when there is no cash to pay with and to sometimes carry accounts for years when hard times strike the country, or when there has been some individual case of misfortune, and to the credit of the trade it may be said that they never shrink from doing all that their capital will allow of this sort of thing, and sometimes a great deal more, in spite of possible disastrous results to themselves. It does seem, therefore, too bad that when there is some cash trade going these eastern sharks should slip in and take it away from local traders. And more so because there is no good reason whatever why these should get the business. They do not handle better goods, nor do they offer better bargains when everything is taken into consideration. They make no redress whatever if goods are not what have been ordered and in the case of miscarriage in delivery they do not hold themselves responsible. The goods have all to be ordered from catalogues and price lists and are often made to appear very superior to what they really are. The moral of all this is that western consumers should keep their trade at home. The remedy rests with them.

## CURRENT COMMENT.

A great mistake is made by some merchants who are otherwise up-to-date in the matter of returning money for goods which have been bought by a customer and afterwards found unsuitable for some reason. As a general rule it is better for the merchant to return the money in such cases, even though he may feel sure that it will be spent for an article of the same kind in the store of a rival. There are, of course, cases where the

merchant would be doing himself an injustice to humor a customer by returning money for goods taken from his store, but these are exceptional. As a rule, the privilege will not be abused and will win many a good customer to the store. When it is made a feature of the advertising that this will be done there should not be the slightest hesitation in carrying out the promise when asked to do so.

A rotten state of affairs has been revealed in connection with the recent failure of the Montreal Cold Storage and Freezing Company. Bogus warehouse receipts to the amount of \$550,000 have been issued by this concern to bolster up an otherwise insolvent estate, and now the perpetrators of the fraud cannot be found. The officers of the company all disclaim responsibility, the bank which held the receipts as security denies all knowledge of the crooked work, and so far the source of the fraud remains undiscovered. Investigation into the affair is still going on with a view to locating the criminal.

The Pan-American exposition to be held in Buffalo next year from May 1 to November 1 promises to be a remarkable affair in many ways. Its purpose is to celebrate the achievements of civilization during 100 years of development in the western hemisphere. The resources for the purpose of the exposition are \$5,800,000. The site covers 350 acres, nearly half of which consists of beautiful park lands and lakelets. Over 20 large buildings are now in course of erection, besides a vast amount of construction work about the grounds. Architectural and landscape effects of great beauty are being planned. Many states and counties have signified their intention of being represented by buildings and exhibits. The electrical display will be particularly fine, embracing the very latest of everything in the way of electrical science. Power from Niagara Falls will be used to run the machinery. A live stock exhibit covering ten acres will be a feature. These are only a few of the attractions.

## C. P. R. Machinists' Strike Award.

Robert Strang, the third arbitrator in the C. P. R. machinists dispute, has completed his report and given his decision to the C. P. R. representative, J. A. M. Aikins.

His award provides a schedule allowing the men a minimum wage of 27c per hour at Winnipeg. The men asked for 28½c and had been receiving 25c per hour heretofore. Thus an increase of 1½ to 2c per hour is provided.

The machinists from Fort William to Laggan receive an increase of two cents an hour, and from Laggan to Kamloops, both points exclusive, one cent an hour, and from Kamloops to Vancouver two cents an hour. The probationary rates of new men and of old men who have served their time in the company's shops will remain as before, but the periods of probation are reduced from one year to six months and from two years to one year respectively.

The one cent rate from Laggan to Kamloops includes the West Kootenay.

## Sale of Sheepskins.

London, Sept. 13.—The sale of sheepskins was held to-day. The number of skins offered was 3,233. There was the usual attendance, but competition was unsatisfactory, much of the stock being withdrawn at an average decline of 10 per cent. compared with the August figures. Merinos and fine cross-breeds were ¼d to 3 farthings lower, and coarse stock ¾d lower.