

WINNIPEG ELEVATORS.

The report of the quarterly meeting of the Winnipeg Board of Trade, which will be found in another portion of our column, is a proof that at last that body have realized the importance of a grain storage system for the city. The action of the City Council on Wednesday evening offering exemption from taxation to parties constructing public elevators indicates that interest in the undertaking is not wanting in that locality either, so that now it may safely be said that a combined effort is likely to be made to secure the construction of elevators in this city. No person interested in Winnipeg's progress can wish anything but success to the effort, and there is little doubt, but it will prove successful.

It might not be out of place now to note some of the objections which are made to the practicability of securing an elevator system in this city, and the making of the same a paying investment.

The principal objection made by objectors to an elevator system here is, that it is the interests of the managers of the C.P.R. to have the grain of the North-west stored on the Lake Superior shore at Port Arthur, and thus to place its carrying to the Atlantic ports beyond the reach of American railway lines. Admitting that storage at Port Arthur would secure this immunity from competition, although this is doubtful, the C.P.R. managers have that same power in their hands, even with grain stored at Winnipeg, and their last tables of freight rates show by their discrimination against freight to the south, that they thoroughly understand how to make use of the advantage. Storage at Port Arthur would, therefore, give them no extra power in this direction, while it would cause unlimited inconvenience to the grain interests of the North-west.

Another very potent argument against the C.P.R. being interested in centering grain storage at Port Arthur was used by Mr. J. H. Ashdown at the meeting of the Board of Trade referred to, namely, that with grain stored at Winnipeg freight cars unloaded at this city during the time of open navigation could return to Port Arthur loaded with grain, instead of empty, and thus make a system of economy for the company. Arguments of economy are powerful ones in the judgment of railway managers, but they are

usually considered secondary to those of protection from competition. A view ahead of a very few years will show that with the bulk of the North-western grain stored at Winnipeg the C.P.R. will be in much less danger from competition than if stored at Port Arthur. As already stated discriminating rates to the south affords a complete protection against American railways, but at Port Arthur competition with the lake shipping would be unavoidable, once the North Shore line of the company is constructed. Their interest must be to carry grain to the ports of the Atlantic by an all rail route, otherwise the portion of their lines which cost most for construction will be practically valueless during the summer months, as competition with lake freights would be a matter impossible. With grain stored at Winnipeg, the C.P.R. managers could by that process of freight-rate doctoring, so well understood by railway men, dictate what course the grain would take to the Atlantic. It must, therefore, be the interest of the C.P.R. to have the bulk of the grain storage of the North-west centered in Winnipeg, when their line by the north shore of Lake Superior is completed, and indications now are that that work will be completed at a much earlier date than was contemplated a year ago.

There is really no reason for Winnipeggers to fear an elevator system at Port Arthur, but on the contrary one there would be of immense advantage to grain men in this city. All that is necessary is that the C.P.R. give to both places equal advantages with towns further west in the matter of through freight rates, and two prosperous and remunerative systems of grain storage must grow up, one in each town, each of which must as a matter of necessity be dependent to a great extent upon the other, and co-operate for mutual interests. The handling, loading and trimming of grain going by lake is a branch of trade which must prove of great value to Port Arthur, and must necessitate considerable grain storage facilities for its working. This will in no way interfere with the grain interests of Winnipeg, except advantageously, and on the other hand Port Arthur must profit, by having a city like Winnipeg acting as a huge collecting agency for grain that must of necessity go to the Atlantic through that port.

An objection frequently heard against elevators in Winnipeg is, that such a sys-

tem has never proved practicable or profitable in an inland town. Allowing for argument sake that the assertion in this argument is correct, its potency is about as great as that of the Yankee farmer's in favor of lightning rods. His house had been once struck by lightning, after which he had a rod erected, and it never was struck again. Therefore, he concluded that lightning rods were an effectual protection from electric accident. But the assertion that elevators in inland towns or cities are not practicable and profitable, finds a complete refutation in the case of Minneapolis. There an elevator system of nearly 4,000,000 bushels capacity has proved a very profitable investment, and its practicability is demonstrated in the fact, that Minneapolis controls absolutely the marketing of all the grain raised north and west of the city and within the United States. So much so is this the case, that a grade for hard wheat, such as is raised in the North-west is not necessary in the inspection at either Chicago or Milwaukee, wheat of that class being bought and sold in these two great grain centres as Minneapolis No. 1 hard, No. 2 hard or whatever grade it may have received in that city. There is no reason why the grades at Winnipeg once established should not be as reliable and as well known as those of Minneapolis, and a few years will no doubt make them so.

But it must not for a moment be admitted that Winnipeg is an inland city in the sense that these objectors would imply. A comparatively small work in the way of clearing the Red River at St. Andrew's rapids, and dredging at its delta, will make the city the head of deep water navigation in the North west, and the key to the chain of lakes whose outlets are to the north, just as much as Port Arthur is the key to the lakes flowing to the Atlantic.

Taking the whole of the objections we hear of into consideration we fail to see why they should discourage any one interested in a Winnipeg elevator system, and there is little reason to think that they will seriously impede the progress of any movement in that direction.

Evidently interest in this all important matter is thoroughly awakened in Winnipeg, and with its awakening the formation of an elevator company would be very opportune. Let the present interest die away, and the opportunity for action may never again be so good.