

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 11, 1884.

THE HUDSON'S BAY CONTROVERSY.

The minds of some people in Manitoba are again exercised over the navigability of the Hudson's Bay and Straits, and opinions are almost as varied as they were a year ago. The cruise of the *Neptune* seems to have only furnished ground for further discussion between the advocates and opponents of the route, and it is very doubtful if the result of the whole expedition will have the effect of bringing about any more unanimity of opinion on the subject. The opinions of one or other who sailed and returned with the *Neptune* seems to be formed just in accordance with the wishes or interests of the parties who give them and are not accepted as arguments of weight for or against the opening of the route.

From the first proposal of sending an expedition at the expense of the Dominion Government, there sprung up in this province a feeling that the real objects of the same would be to do as much as possible to discourage the opening of the route, which, however, was not held by many. There were and still are, nevertheless, a much larger number of people who believe that the main object of the expedition was to delay as much as possible the construction of the railway and opening of the route in order that the railway policy of the present Government might not be obstructed. This view is not an unreasonable one, for Sir John Macdonald's Government have no spare time to give to any railway scheme outside of the C. P. R. It will require all their tact, force and financial influence to secure its completion and a popular movement in favor of a Hudson's Bay railway might seriously impede the break-neck progress at which they are forcing its construction. They know well that to allow of any lagging in the work of the C. P. R. construction means the failure to complete the road before they are compelled to again appeal to the people, and an appeal with the road in an unfinished state would very likely prove an ineffectual one. With such a prospect before the Government in power, it is only natural that they should seek to delay any other great railway scheme, and especially one which a look at the map of North Amer-

ica shows will be the most revolutionary of all others on the traffic affairs of the whole continent. They simply apply to politics the old warning about too many irons in the fire. Their method of delay is certainly effectual. They start out an expedition which is expected to extend over three years before the practicability or impracticability of the route can be decided, and in the interval trust the charter to build a railway that will cost at least \$15,000,000 to men who are unable to raise in ten years enough to build fifty miles of the proposed six hundred and fifty. Once the C. P. R. is completed and a lack is felt by Sir John and his associates of something stirring or sensational for political capital, the Hudson's Bay route might prove very convenient. The rights contained in the charter granted last session will have been forfeited by its owners long before that, and the opportunity of transferring all to some wealthy and powerful monopoly will then be good. It would never do for any Canadian Government to oppose defiantly such a progressive movement as the construction of a Hudson's Bay railway, but it is quite within the accepted ideas of modern political economy to manipulate such a movement for the benefit of a political party.

When we look at the Hudson's Bay expedition as part and parcel of such a policy as above described, we must conclude that arguments upon its first results are comparatively useless. It will be found that the feasibility or nonfeasibility of the route and the reports from the expedition thereon will be in proportion to the advisability of the Ottawa Government's necessity for the route as political capital. The people of the Northwest are powerless to make their influence felt in the matter, and before they are strong enough in numbers influence or financial power to make themselves so, the construction of a railway to the Hudson's Bay will be in the hands of some powerful eastern monopoly which will be a buttress for support to an Ottawa Government.

IMMIGRATION TO MANITOBA.

Statements have of late been made in our provincial press, that the number of immigrants who have come to the Northwest during 1884 has been somewhere in the neighbourhood of twenty thousand, a rather small figure indeed when we take

into consideration the advantages this vast country offers to new settlers. Small however, as the number seems, the people of Manitoba must feel that their share of this influx of settlers has been infinitesimally so. It is a liberal estimate for the province to say, that less than twenty per cent. of these twenty thousand immigrants have settled within the limits of Manitoba proper, the balance having gone beyond to the Northwest Territories, and in looking at these strange facts, one is forced to ask for the reason. It is a fact beyond doubt, that the province of Manitoba comprises more rich fertile lands in proportion to its area, than any other portion of the Northwest, and it is equally beyond doubt, that large tracts of these lands are now actually begging for settlement, and are offered at prices and on terms within the reach of any immigrant prepared to take up a farm. Further the *Manitoba Gazette* for weeks back has contained notices of sales of thousands of acres of good lands for the taxes due upon them. There must be some very strong reason for these lands lying unoccupied, while immigrants are rushing further westward to find homes and farms hundreds of miles further away from eastern markets and centres of settlement, and where social, religious and educational advantages are much inferior to what they are within the limits of this province.

For several years back we have been hearing the cry that the vacant lands of Manitoba were owned by speculators and held at ransom prices which new settlers cannot afford to pay, and until the present year opened there was some truth in these statements. They are practically without foundation now, however, as even those speculative land owners, who are still able to hold their uncultivated farm lands and pay taxes on them, are heartily tired of doing so, and are prepared to sell at very moderate figures, while a great many others are unable to hold out longer, and would be glad to sell at very low figures could they do so, but they find no demand for their lands, even when settlers are rushing in hundreds to points further westward in search of farms.

There is but one explanation to be given of the strange state of affairs above described, and that is that the vacant lands of Manitoba are not advertised, and consequently are not sold. It should be