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EDITORIAL

The Rough and Tumble of Competition.

The doubling of equipment and duplicating of facilities as a means of cheapening service is a fallacy under which people have labored since the race came down out of the branches of trees and began to cultivate the earth. Its keynote is retaliation which implies that in order that a certain individual or corporation or institution may prosper another shall suffer. The premises is false although many larger businesses have been built upon the ruins of weaker competitors. These reflections are projected by observing each day the construction of the provincial government telephone system in the city of Winnipeg. The people will expend an immense amount of money in order to make the Bell Telephone Company give their service for less pay and at the same time reduce the possibility of the Bell Company extending its business, which in the natural course of events would mean the cheapening of service.

That the public will get a cheaper telephone service there is little doubt. The plan which is usually followed by the company in possession of a franchise is to keep rates up until the government or a competing service is ready to operate and then drop them so low at points, where there is competition, that the latest installed system will have to run at a loss in order to secure business. Thus an established company by charging excessive prices where there is no opposition can dominate a situation and very frequently crowd out competition by lowering prices where opposition develops. Whether or not this will be the case in Manitoba remains to be seen. In any event we are bound to the expense of a new system, many people will be put to the expense of subscribing to two telephone companies, and eventually the total cost of telephone service is quite likely to be greater than if we paid exorbitant prices to a monopoly.

This, we need scarcely say, is not a plea for the maintenance of a monopoly of any description but rather to protest against the principle generally adopted by governments of answering the demands of the public for a lessening of corporation oppression. It is a sorry sight to see the sovereign will of the people ignored by creatures to whom it has given life. It is a serious comment upon the intelligence of the public where, in order to protect itself from an avaricious corporation owing its existence to the public, we have to create another corporation and start it on the same unreasonable way as the first. If the people rule the country, why can we not manage more economically, and if we do not, why should we not set about the wrestling of power and influence from those who abuse it. And, of course, creating strong competing institutions does in a manner assert authority, but averts that other function of government, namely, the fostering of enterprises for the public weal. As we had occasion to say once before, our governments should not be put to the necessity of a rough and tumble commercial fight to assert their authority or to protect the public interest. We, as Anglo-Saxons, are pastmasters in the art of government, and the time is ripe now for another forward move.

Local Trains.

In India, time is regarded by the natives as something to be killed. If a man missed a train, he calmly asks when the next train goes to his destination and on learning the hour sits patiently on the roadside chiding his spirit or crucifying his feet until the "Bombay Limited" or "Calcutta

Express" comes along, no matter if twenty-three hours and fifty-five minutes are wasted in waiting. Along the main line of the C. P. R. circumstances are reversed. A traveller goes to the station expecting to be taken to his destination at the hour set by the railway company, but about as often as not learns that the corporation has not kept the appointment. People drive from a long distance out in the country to the railway depot to meet friends who are scheduled to arrive at a certain hour but are delayed on account of the long distance the train has to travel from terminal to terminal. The result is that it is no unusual sight to find group after group every eight miles across the country who are not from choice but by force of circumstances waiting by the roadside just like their heathen Hindoo brothers, with this difference, that the Hindoo displays patience, does not rail at the company, and is thankful for the opportunity to bless Ishwar in quietness. What a delightful place India must be for railway companies! But the patience of Canadians is a diminutive quantity and the time that is wasted and lost to the country in waiting about railway depots is a serious dissipation of our chief asset, human energy. The remedy may be applied by both traveller and company. By the former in using wherever possible the local short-distance trains, and, by the company in furnishing more local trains for its main line. Waiting upon the convenience of others tends to develop lax and slovenly methods in business, a characteristic which we have difficulty enough in keeping subdued, and which should not be induced by powerful corporations.

Candles Under Beds.

Not one, but dozens of farmers have rubbed the contents of a head of wheat into their hands, have blown upon them to separate the chaff from the grain and have found their hands empty. The single breath was the test of the experiment of devoting the time and energy of the whole season to one crop. This year, on many farms, the experiment was a failure. Not that frost came and wrinkled the coat, leaving the grain lighter and less valuable for milling, but over thousands of acres not a bushel of wheat could be found though the straw and heads promised an excellent yield.

The philosopher who lost by the freaks of the weather takes his loss calmly and consoles himself with the reflection that, "we can't expect big crops every year and that on an average we have pretty fair returns from our farms." Such a reflection is all very well, but farming nor any other business cannot stand a total loss as often as our climate gets freakish. The conclusion of the whole matter is that our system of cropping so exclusively to wheat is foolhardy. Nor does the contention hold good that high-priced grain and feed stuffs and the scarcity of labor take all the profit out of mixed farming. The fact of the matter is there are a lot of farmers who are even more shortsighted than those bankers who will not advance loans to transport wheat. There is a deal of satisfaction and comfort in having a bunch of hogs to turn off every six months or oftener, and in the security of a creamery check every month, whether we have a frost in August or not.

The aim of about ninety per cent. of the farming community of the three northwest provinces should be to gather a few more cows about their farms, to keep a few more hogs for market, to fence more land, to seed more to grass and clover, to increase the size of the poultry flock, in short, to use the farm for all that it is capable of producing. This thing of being content with raising wheat from a farm is like buying a piano and then striking only one note. There are a lot of candles under beds and bushels that unless they are brought out soon will be burning in some other person's house. The mixed farming doc-

trine is worthy of particular study this year by fortunate and unfortunate alike.

The Money Stringency.

An unprecedented thing happened in the grain trade last week. Banks closed down tight and hard on shippers and refused to advance the money necessary to transport wheat across the lakes. Vessels chartered at Fort William to carry grain down were held for days unable to load and finally were forced to seek cargoes elsewhere. The Duluth Board of Trade suspended business for three days in the hope that market conditions would improve. At Winnipeg, cash wheat was saleable only to milling companies buying in small quantities. Export demand was good but none could be forwarded, shippers being unable to procure sufficient cash to move their grain even the length of the first lap of its journey.

This condition of affairs, certainly a condition unique in Canadian grain trading circles, is due, we are told to "complications arising from the present stringency of the money market." The simple fact of the matter is that the Canadian National banks hesitate to accept wheat as sound security for loans, while down into the frenzied maelstrom of New York they are pouring millions of dollars, there to be let out as call loans at fabulous rates of interest to gamblers speculating in stocks, stock much of which has little value, in fact, but which these banks of ours readily accept as collateral security for the people's funds. This is the chief cause of the money stringency of the money market. This, the reason of the banks inability to advance the carriage charges on wheat.

Western trade for some time has been seriously handicapped by reason of this money stringency, and banking magnates have warned us against incurring any useless expenditures or indulging too freely in legitimate speculation. But while trading has been hampered to some extent and enterprise checked, nothing equal to present conditions was anticipated. We have always been taught to believe that wheat, next to land, landed property or gold was the soundest security on earth, and that when our crop was safely harvested the "money stringency," so far as the West is concerned would disappear: that wheat was wealth and readily exchanged for the currency of the realm. If the present state of things continues, country elevators must cease buying grain. Wheat prices will go lower, especially prices for the lower grades. Money is needed to handle our exportable wheat and unless that money is forthcoming we are going to receive a set-back such as we never experienced before.

In Self-Defence.

Certain letters in our mail the past few weeks have given us some surprises. There have been several requests for information from persons whose names are not on our circulation lists. Another writes suggesting that we publish a market report, and another because we refuse to insinuate that the recent riots at Vancouver were instigated by "Yankees" and thereby imply that the average American is itching for trouble with Canada, that we have no backbone, and another that because we publish in Manitoba our paper is not applicable to British Columbia conditions. Such a series of letters convince us that we are misunderstood. In the first place we maintain our questions and answers columns, at considerable expense for expert opinions, for the benefit of our regular subscribers. The column is an institution by which readers may acquire much information upon purely local or personal affairs. It discusses questions in particular rather than general. It might be made of as much use to a reader as a correspondence school education. In fact, we know of readers who make scrap books of the questions and answers in these columns and eventually provide