

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JULY 15, 1884.

## COUNTER-IRRITATION.

The action of the Winnipeg Board of Trade in sending a deputation to St. Paul to arrange for a service of steamboats on the Red River, between this city and St. Vincent, which will enable importers here to bring goods from the east without using the C.P.R. track, is a very decided step in the way of applying a counter-irritant against the double policy of choke-off and discrimination which the O.P.R. Company seem determined to carry out towards the city of Winnipeg. Every true friend of Canada must regret that such a policy has to be adopted on the part of the trading community of this city, yet, at the same time, the most extreme partizans of the C.P.R. must acknowledge that our traders have been forced to this extreme course.

There are still a few people who claim that the officers of the C.P.R. have the right to decide as they please as to whether the freight advantages usually granted to a wholesale centre, should be accorded to Winnipeg; and some go so far as to assert that these same officers are best able to judge where the location of wholesale centres will be best for the welfare of the country through which their lines run. The first right here claimed we do not deny. But the merchants of this city have rights also, and they only exercise an unquestioned one, when they take steps to be as independent as they can of a corporation, whose officers cannot afford to give a decided reply to claims made, even when over a year has been allowed for them to make up their minds upon the subject. As to the second claim about the location of wholesale centres, a reply is unnecessary. The merchants of this city have decided that a wholesale centre shall be located here, and the opinions of the officers of the C.P.R., or any other railway, they neither ask for nor place any value upon. The claim, however, is so absurd, that we cannot believe that the present officers of the road would be foolish enough to urge it.

It does seem strange that the officers of the C.P.R. have not extended to the Winnipeg importers that courtesy, which one business man should at all times accord to another. When farmers in the

Northwest made their cry about agricultural depression and burdensome freight rates, the officers of this road were prompt and liberal in mitigating the evils complained of, although complaints were not made in the courteous form in which the business men of Winnipeg couched their claims. Probably determined urgency has more effect upon the O.P.R. managers than courtesy. They will doubtless soon discover that, while the merchants of this city can be courteous they can be firm, and they have now taken a step from which they will not readily recede. They are entering upon a war into which they have been forced, and, assuredly, they will fight with the bitterness which desperation lends. The commercial existence of many of them depends upon their being successful, and men in such a position, especially intelligent business men, may make more stubborn opponents than even the C.P.R. officers, with a tyrant Government at Ottawa at their back, care to struggle with.

It does seem strange that men like General Manager Van Horne and Superintendent Egan, whose training and experience in railway affairs should make them essentially western men in their ideas and policy, should pursue the course they now do towards the city of Winnipeg, the commercial centre of the country in which the hopes of the C.P.R. must centre, and it is questionable, if left to their own judgment, if they would long pursue it. But they are only the servants of a combination of eastern men, whose interests and aim it is to cripple as much as possible the commercial progress of the Northwest, without materially injuring its agricultural progress. Even these eastern men are in turn only tools to carry out the wild dream of an overbearing Ottawa Ministry, led by a Premier whose political vanity has, in latter years, run away with his judgment, and political usefulness. Placed in such circumstances the present officers of the C.P.R. are fitter subjects for pity than blame.

In this struggle that the business men of Winnipeg have entered upon, it is not at all likely that they will mistake their real enemies, and saddle the odium on a railway general manager that should fall upon a Montreal Syndicate and an Ottawa Cabinet. In this move towards bringing freight down the Red River in steamboats, they strike their first decided blow at a railway monopoly which has

utterly failed in bringing to this country the benefits it was expected to, and asserted by its creators that it would, and which has become so much of an oppression to Manitoba that its life must be short, even if it is ended in open defiance of the Ottawa doctrine of disallowance. The present course pursued in discriminating freight rates against Winnipeg will certainly not tend to lengthen its existence.

## RED RIVER NAVIGATION.

The step taken at the last meeting of the Winnipeg Board of Trade in connection with the improvement of the Red River for the purpose of navigation, must commend itself to all interested in the progress of the Northwest. While millions of money are being spent in cutting, bridging and tunneling through the Rocky Mountains, and other ranges of hills in the western portion of this Dominion, it is to be feared that by far too little attention is being paid to our Northern water stretches. It can scarcely be expected that any great amount of trouble or expense can, for some time, be bestowed upon the improvement of rivers in the far west where settlement is as yet very thin, and trade of very little importance. But the Red River, which seems destined by nature as a great highway of traffic, and on which a very small expenditure would make one of the most useful navigable streams of our continent, is certainly entitled to consideration and outlay on the part of the Dominion Government.

If we confine the purpose of Red River improvement to the sphere of purely local development, the importance of the work is sufficient to warrant a liberal outlay by the Dominion. Nothing would tend more to develop the rich timber and other resources of Lake Winnipeg, and its connecting lakes, than a free waterway for craft of moderate draught of water from the lake to the southern boundary of Manitoba. Railways cannot always be substituted for waterways, and there are several circumstances which prevent their filling the bill in Manitoba. From the shores of Lake Winnipeg must come the bulk of the wood fuel for this city and other towns of the province; and as a power in developing the lumbering trade of our lakes and enabling our local lumbermen to successfully compete with United States manufacturers a depth of