

# THE COMMERCIAL

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

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D. W. BUCHANAN,  
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 Can-  
ada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also  
reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manu-  
facturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada

WINNIPEG, APRIL 15, 1899.

## MUNICIPAL MISMANAGEMENT.

We made reference recently to the loose way in which municipal accounts are kept in many rural districts, and the need of government supervision of the same. This is not the only complaint which can be justly made as to the management of many municipalities. In some Manitoba municipalities much of the labor and money expended in so called public improvements is practically wasted. It is only necessary to drive through some of these municipalities to discern this fact, and the drive need not be very far from Winnipeg either. Winnipeg is surrounded by the oldest municipalities in the province, yet practically nothing has been done in these municipalities, or at least in some of them, towards carrying out efficient public improvements. Year after year for a quarter of a century or thereabouts, for instance, the residents of these municipalities have been going along doing a certain amount of work in the form of statute labor on their roads, yet there is not a single mile of passable road in these districts. The main roads leading into the city are practically impassable in wet weather. During prolonged periods of wet weather, such as was experienced last fall, it was simply out of the question to think of moving a load of any ma-

terial over these roads. It was a day's work, and a very disagreeable day's work at that, to travel a few miles with an empty vehicle. The farmers had simply to shut themselves up on their farms for weeks at a time.

The need of good country roads is one of the most important problems in Manitoba to-day. The loss in enforced idleness and in wear and tear of horse-flesh and vehicles, on account of bad roads, must be something enormous. It would appear that the government might also do good work in this direction, by establishing a good roads' department and employing experts in road building, for the benefit of the municipalities. In Ontario something of this nature has been undertaken by the provincial government. More than half the work done on the country roads is wasted through lack of knowledge of the rudiments of road building. The antiquated statute labor system is another hindrance to securing good results in road making. If the legislature would abolish statute labor entirely it would be an excellent start toward establishing more likely conditions for securing good work in the municipalities. The progressive municipalities in Ontario have discontinued the statute labor system. Effective work can never be done under this plan.

If these old Manitoba municipalities had constructed one mile of good road each year, they would by this time have had a considerable mileage of passable roads. As it is, there is nothing to show for the labor and expenditure. In one municipality adjoining the city the people are wasting their money on the vicious principle of giving a bonus to a mill, which is about as much needed as is an extra wheel for the wagons of the farmers, while the residents go wallowing through the mud the same as they did twenty-five years ago. A good road leading into the city through the municipality, would be of more practical value to the residents, and would do more to improve the value of their property than a score of little flour mills, such as the one they are giving their money for.

With lack of business capacity and lack of practical knowledge as the leading characteristics of rural municipal management in too many districts, there seems to be very little to hope for in the way of road or other public improvement in such districts. It would seem worth while considering the advisability of originating some plan whereby the provincial government could take charge to some extent at least of the work of road building in the rural districts. There are probably too many small municipalities in some parts of the province to favor good work in road

building. Many of the roads should continue through two or more municipalities. The question of government action or control of road building in the municipalities is of course a difficult matter to deal with, but it surely seems high time that something were done looking to an improvement of the situation as regards country roads in Manitoba.

## TRADING STAMPS.

To the Editor of The Commercial.

I agree with the principle of your article of April 1, regarding stamps. The statement that the benefit from cash business should be divided entirely between the merchant and his customer seems right in principle, but at the same time there is a great convenience in using the trading stamps. A merchant cannot make it convenient to allow a cash discount on every small cash purchase of ten or twenty cents. It would only be a nuisance to the customer and merchant alike to give a cash discount of a cent or so on every small sale. In this way the trading stamps come in as a very convenient way of giving the discount.

Yours Resp.,

CITY GROCER.

NOTE—The answer to City Grocer is very simple. Every merchant can have his own stamp or coupon. There is nothing to hinder the merchant from giving a check which will represent the cash discount. When the customer accumulates a certain number of these checks, say to the amount of \$1, they could be presented and redeemed in cash or its equivalent in goods. In this way the customer would be educated as to the benefit of buying for cash. He would get his discount in cash instead of in some article which he might not have any use for. Besides, the system here proposed would be a far more business-like way of doing the thing than dividing up the profit (which belongs entirely to the merchant and his customer) with a third party. At the same time the merchant would have control of the cash discount in his own hands and could fix the rate at any percentage which he might consider advisable.

It would be a perfectly legitimate way of doing business, for the merchant to give cash discount checks of his own, to his cash customers, whereas the principle involved in the trading stamp system does not appear to be a very legitimate way of doing business. One objection to the trading stamp business is, that the merchant does not control the rate of discount. Another very objectionable feature is, that a third party comes between the merchant and his customer and