

the curling bonspiel which will be held in the city, when special low rates will be given by the railways. Parties attending the convention will thus be able to take advantage of the reduced railway rates.

Parties to whom the cards were sent, were also asked to suggest subjects for discussion at the proposed convention. This has been done by nearly all of those who have replied, and as a result quite a variety of subjects have been named, most of which are of more or less interest to the West as a whole or to large sections of the country. A few subjects have been repeatedly mentioned by many of those replying. The credit system in one form or another evidently occupies a foremost position in the minds of many, from the frequency with which it is mentioned by those who suggest subjects for discussion at the proposed convention. Freight rates probably come next in order in the frequency with which it is mentioned. The tariff is also frequently mentioned, some referring particularly to the need of lower duties on certain classes of goods specially in the interest of the West. Nearly all the replies received from Calgary, Edmonton, Malceod, Lethbridge and other points in Alberta, mention the proposed Crow's Nest Pass railway as an urgent subject for discussion. Handling produce is mentioned quite often. Several important legal questions bearing on our mercantile system are also brought up in various forms by a number of those replying, such as the exemption law, lien law, a cheapening of the legal procedure in collecting small debts, bankruptcy law, law too favorable to fraudulent debtors, etc. The exemption laws are most frequently referred to in this class of subjects. Several think something should be done to check or offset the disadvantage that country merchants suffer from having to compete with peddlers, agents and departmental stores. In the list of strictly mercantile questions, compromises, the disposal of bankrupt stocks and price cutting are several times referred to. These are three very important questions of general interest to merchants all over the country, and to both wholesale and retail dealers. Immigration is several times mentioned, and several replies from western points also mention irrigation. The quarantine regulations are mentioned by two or three and the grain grades and elevator system are also mentioned in two or three instances. One party suggests the advisability of having business associations formed in the smaller towns, another thinks that business men should have a reduced railway rate in coming to the city to purchase goods, another wants the lumber duties removed, and another wants the Hudson's Bay Railway talked up. Refrigerator cars and cold storage service are mentioned by two or three. Insurance rates are mentioned by several parties.

These suggestions are from the replies received shortly after the cards were sent out. No doubt a considerable number of replies will come to hand later, suggesting subjects not already mentioned, but the list is already a formidable one. Most of the subjects suggested are such as can be discussed to advantage at a promiscuous gathering of business men. In the case of a few of the

subjects nothing could be gained by their discussion at any length. The large number of replies sent in and the large list of subjects suggested for discussion, however, would indicate that considerable interest is being taken throughout the country in the proposed convention. The Winnipeg board will consider the replies and probably invitations will be sent out when the date is finally decided upon.

REGULATING LAKE MANITOBA LANDS.

Mr. G. H. Webster, chief engineer of the Manitoba and Northwestern railway, who has taken great interest in the question of lowering the level of Lake Manitoba, states that he has found a "cheaper and more useful route" than the one first proposed. The route would be from Lake Manitoba via Portage creek, to within six miles of the town of Portage la Prairie, thence east to Long Lake Portage creek Mr. Webster says, has a depth of from three to seven feet or over, and could very easily be utilized as a part of the route. From Portage creek about six miles of a solid cut would require to be made to reach a branch of Long Lake, after which very little work would be necessary to open the canal through to the Assiniboine river. The route surveyed some years ago by the Winnipeg city engineer, in connection with the proposed canal and water-power at Winnipeg, would require about twelve miles of excavating. At the time the city engineer made the survey, there was a proposal under discussion to utilize the water-power on the Assiniboine river at Winnipeg. In order to secure a larger flow of water for this water-power, it was proposed to cut a canal from Lake Manitoba to the Assiniboine river, and turn a portion of the surplus waters from the lake into the river, thus largely increasing the flow of water in the Assiniboine river.

In connection with this proposal to cut a canal from Lake Manitoba to the Assiniboine river, it must be borne in mind that sooner or later some work will have to be done to control the water level of Lake Manitoba. Thos. Guerin, a Dominion Government engineer, estimated that the area of land submerged around Lake Manitoba, above the normal level of the lake, is 206,720 acres. He further estimated that to cut a channel by way of Lake St. Martin to Lake Winnipeg, to reclaim these lands, would cost \$281,000. The value of the land which would be reclaimed, estimated at \$1.50 per acre, would more than repay the cost of the work.

The important point in connection with this subject is, that the level of the lake can be reduced and the lands reclaimed just as easily by cutting a canal from the lake to the Assiniboine river, as by opening a channel at the northern outlet via Lake St. Martin. The canal to the Assiniboine river would also serve other valuable purposes besides reclaiming the submerged lands about the lake. It would assist in draining the low lands about Long Lake. It would increase the flow of water in the Assiniboine river, and double the available water-power on the Assiniboine river at Winnipeg. The most important point of all, however, is, that it

would form the most important link in opening a great inland system of navigation, connecting the Red river, the Assiniboine river, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis and the Saskatchewan rivers. Some of the great advantages which would accrue through the development of this great inland system of navigation have been referred to in previous issues of The Commercial. The matter is surely one which should receive the early attention of the provincial and local governments.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

In another column will be found a resolution passed by the Lethbridge board of trade regarding the proposed Crow's Nest pass railway. The wisdom of maintaining the principle contained in this resolution will be quite evident to all. If, as it is claimed, the Crow's Nest pass is the only practical route through the Rocky mountains within 350 miles of the international boundary, it is certainly very desirable that the right of way through the pass should be retained by the government. In referring to this pass as the only available route for a railway through the mountains, it will be understood that the Bow pass is already controlled by the Canadian Pacific railway.

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THERE are certainly two sides to the proposal to reduce the postage rates on letters to two cents. In the United States a large deficit has annually occurred in the working of the postal department since the reduction to a two cent letter rate was made, though previous to this a surplus was the rule. It is estimated by the department that a two cent rate would increase the annual deficit in Canada, in the postal department, by about three quarters of a million dollars, or about double the usual deficit. While the postal department should not be expected to produce a revenue, the wisdom of reducing the rates in the face of an annual deficit is open to question.

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A telegram from Ottawa the other day said that the government would not likely agree to the petition of the Montreal and other boards of trade for a reduction in the postage rate on letters. This is a matter which was first brought up by the Winnipeg board and the other boards were invited to join with the Winnipeg board in pressing the matter upon the government. The Montreal board at first refused to join in the movement, but later made representations to the government on its own account. The credit for bringing up the matter, therefore, belongs to the Winnipeg board.

Northwest Ontario.

C. A. Barber and E. W. Barber, architects and mechanical engineers, are opening an office at Rat Portage. The gentlemen have been long well known in Winnipeg.

An application to parliament will be made for a charter to build the Fort Francis and Pacific railway, a line projected from Wabigoon, on the Canadian Pacific railway through the Manitou country to Rainy River, and touching at the chief mining camps. The proposed road will be operated by electricity.