

# 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 Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, OCT. 14, 1899.

## THE WARD SYSTEM.

Winnipeg city aldermen have voted in favor of the mayor's calling a public meeting to discuss the ward system. It is to be hoped the business men of the city will take an interest in this matter. The ward system is one which has been already discussed in these columns in the past. Many thoughtful persons are of the opinion that this system is not conducive to the best administration of civic affairs. The statement that the ward system has been long in use and is still the prevailing plan in this country and the United States, is not an all powerful argument in its favor. At any rate, some progress is now being made toward abolishing the system in progressive towns.

The argument in favor of the ward system is that it secures local representation for each district of the city or town. If good men are secured, it should not be necessary to elect men for each section, to watch each other and try to secure what they call a fair distribution of the expenditure in each division of the city. The squabbles to secure expenditures in the various wards is really one of the disadvantages of the system. The promotion of the interests of the city at large should be the guiding principle.

The selection of aldermen by a general vote of the whole city should be conducive to the election of the best men. Under the ward system the candidates for one ward may all be indifferent timber, or poor men may even be elected by acclamation for want of a contest, while in another ward several first-class men may be in the field, some of whom must of necessity be left out. If the alder-

men were elected by a general vote of the whole city, there would be a wider range to select from and the best men should stand a better chance of election. Petty ward influences, which sometimes tend to bring out and elect poor men, would be relegated to the background.

If along with the abolition of the ward system the personal solicitation of votes, either by the candidate or his friend, could be done away with, a great step in advance would be accomplished. Men whose services would be of great advantage to the city, are prevented from becoming candidates because of the dislike they rightly feel to the custom of soliciting votes. The custom is one which is repugnant to many men. Public discussion is commendable, but private solicitation is objectionable, in civic as well as in provincial or federal elections.

## THE METRIC SYSTEM.

Sir Henri Joly, on the occasion of his visit to Winnipeg last week, delivered a lecture on the metric system during which he pointed out the necessity for being prepared for the introduction of the system in Canada. All the civilized nations except Great Britain, the United States and Russia now use this system of weights and measures. The two former countries are preparing the way for the adoption of the system, and it is almost certain in time to come into universal use.

Sir Henri, we think made altogether too much of the need of prolonged study of the system. He thought it necessary to begin with the rising generation and teach them the system before it could be generally adopted. To those who have not enquired as to what the metric system is, this would indicate that it would require a great deal of study to master the system. This is all very misleading. The metric system of weights and measures is very simple—so simple that it could be understood by any intelligent person in ten minutes. It is simply the application of the decimal system to weights and measures. Unlike our present irregular modes of computation, the metric system is uniform throughout. It is so simple that it can be mastered in a very short time. Of course, it is quite proper that the system should have a place in our school books, because it is bound to come into use, sooner or later. It is not, however, necessary to drill the rising generation in this matter on account of any difficulty in mastering the system.

The difficulty in the way of introducing the metric system of weights and measures is not on account of the need of any great study in acquiring the system. One objection is the di-

rect pecuniary loss which would be occasioned by the abandonment of our present measures, scales, etc. The other principal objection is the confusion which would result for a time in changing our standards of weights and measure. Instead of a yard of cloth the purchaser would have to call for a metre, or in the place of a pound of butter a kilogramme would be asked for. The metre is not the same length as the yard, and the kilogramme is not the same weight as the pound. It is not study but practical use that is required to familiarize people with the metric system. While the theory of the system is extremely simple there would be a certain amount of confusion in putting it into effect, which no amount of study would avoid. Fifty years of teaching in the schools would not avoid this. A little practical experience with the system in force would soon, however, familiarize people with the change.

The best way to introduce the metric system would be to follow the plan adopted by Germany and make it compulsory after a certain date, allowing, say three or four years for merchants and manufacturers to work off stocks of old measures and scales and have the new patterns ready when the date for the enforcement of the new system arrived. A few weeks of practical use would accustom the people to the change, while years of study of the principle of the system would not prevent the inconveniences which the change will entail when it has to be made.

## HURTFUL CUSTOMS REGULATIONS.

An order has been passed at Ottawa permitting the importation into Manitoba of cottonwood trees from the Northwestern States until January next. The importation of nursery stock into Canada from the United States is prohibited, owing to the fear of introducing San Jose scale. An exception has now been made in favor of the importation into Manitoba and the Territories of cottonwood trees. The object is to encourage the growing of trees in our prairie region, and the cottonwood is considered one of the most suitable for this purpose. This step is a very proper one we believe, so far as it goes. While the fruit regions of Ontario and British Columbia may require protection from United States nursery stock, we do not believe that there is any necessity for applying this prohibition to Manitoba and the Territories. The Northwestern States, which are immediately south of us, are believed to be comparatively free from San Jose scale and there would be little danger of importing nursery stock from say Minnesota and North Dakota. The climate of