

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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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, MAY 13, 1899.

REGULATING THE GRAIN TRADE.

A special meeting of the Winnipeg board of trade was held on Saturday afternoon last, to consider the Douglas bill, introduced at Ottawa with the object of regulating the grain trade of Manitoba and the Territories. The result of the meeting, as will be seen by the report in another column, was the passing of a resolution objecting to the bill in its entirety. That a business organization like the Winnipeg board of trade should condemn the Douglas bill is not to be wondered at. The bill certainly contains some very absurd and very unreasonable proposals. At the same time, the upholding by the board of the elevator restrictions is perhaps a stronger pronouncement against the bill than might have been expected from the board. There can hardly be two opinions as to the value to the country of our unexcelled elevator system, without which the farmer would certainly not be able to realize upon his crop to as good advantage as he now can do. Furthermore, this excellent elevator system is undoubtedly due, to a considerable extent at least, to the elevator restrictions. Viewed from another standpoint, however, these elevator restrictions are irksome, and they certainly interfere with the reasonable liberty of the people. While the prac-

tical working out of the restrictions has been to the general advantage of the country, there is also, it must be admitted, an interference with ordinary commercial conditions, which is not easily reconciled with our ideas of commercial liberty. The general gain to the country, however, may compensate, in the opinion of many, for the overriding of principle.

The elevator restrictions, it must be understood, have been imposed by the railways. In the opinion of The Commercial, it has been a question whether or not the railway companies could not be compelled to accept grain for transportation, shipped through a flat warehouse, without the passing of a special act to secure this end. Should not the general law regarding common carriers, provide for such cases as this?

Now that the elevators have been built under the restrictive conditions, the further question of vested rights is introduced. Over \$2,000,000, it is said, have been invested in modern, standard elevators, under the understanding that cheap elevators and warehouses would not be allowed. It does seem somewhat hard to those who have made this investment, that the restrictions to which they were obliged to yield, should now be abolished and the field thrown open for the erection of a smaller and cheaper class of competing buildings.

The most absurd feature of the Douglas bill is that relating to the appointment of a government official, whose business it would be to watch the grain men as though they were a lot of criminals. It would be about as reasonable to ask for an official to keep a check on the grocers of Manitoba, and to regulate their profits, etc. The farmers are not obliged to sell their grain to any one individual or company. There is ample competition everywhere in the grain trade. If any producer thinks that the proposed dockage for dirt is excessive, he can go to another dealer, or he can have his grain cleaned at the elevator before selling it. He can even load it into a car and ship it. Dealers cannot be expected to pay for seeds of weeds, of which there is such a large percentage in much of the grain offered by the farmers. There are no doubt instances where an unreasonable dockage has been made for dirt, as well as cases where the dockage has not been sufficient to cover the shrinkage on account of dirt in the grain. This, however, will not justify the treatment of the grain dealers generally as a lot of criminals. Such legislation as this proposed by the Douglas bill might go in Russia, but it is a scandalous thing to propose in a British community.

It has hardly been claimed that the elevator charges are excessive. In fact

it is generally admitted that they are moderate. This being the case, it is not necessary to regulate the elevator charges by law. With the ample competition which exists in the grain trade, the elevator charges, as well as the question of dockage, may well be left to be governed by the usual commercial conditions.

WASTE OF LABOR.

The Commercial has several times called attention to the tremendous waste of labor in connection with the scavenging work of the city of Winnipeg. The refuse is carted out of the city some distance and dumped on the prairie. For a city approaching the 50,000 mark in population this seems a very primitive way of disposing of garbage. This garbage is hauled on vehicles over an unimproved road, and every person who is familiar with this part of the country knows that the roads around Winnipeg are practically impassable in wet weather. The waste of labor in hauling this garbage out of the city, particularly when the roads are bad, is beyond the comprehension of any one who has not had some means of observing the situation.

But while this great waste of labor will appeal readily to the business man, this is perhaps not the worst feature of the situation. In prolonged seasons of wet weather the roads become simply impassable, and all attempts to remove the garbage have to be abandoned, thus allowing the city to get into a filthy condition. When this occurs in warm weather there is great danger of disease resulting from the inability of the officials to remove garbage. It is not creditable to the city that this matter has not been satisfactorily dealt with before this.

THE PROPOSED NORTHERN PACIFIC EXTENSION

The Northern Pacific Railway Co. proposes to considerably extend its lines in Manitoba this year. It is proposed to extend the Portage la Prairie branch in a northwesterly direction, between the Canadian Pacific Railway main line and the Manitoba Northwestern, with a spur running south to Brandon. A line in a northerly direction from Portage la Prairie to Lake Manitoba is also proposed, and still another line from Morris in a southeasterly direction to the boundary of the province, about range 7 or 8 east. The latter line, it is supposed, is intended to form part of a through line to Duluth.

A Vermont man is about to make an attempt to raise martens, and will establish a sort of marten farm for the purpose, believing that he can make good money in that way.