

working under the eight-hour and other thousands under the nine-hour system.

The union men of other trades will not work on jobs on which "scabs" are employed. The American Federation of Labor will not scatter its forces, but will center upon the lines laid down; trade by trade, city by city, town by town, it will move along over the whole industrial field."

THE BUTTER QUESTION AGAIN.

One of the greatest difficulties in connection with the handling of butter is the custom which prevails of paying one price for all qualities. This is a difficulty which seems inevitable so long as the butter is handled through the stores. The great bulk of the butter produced in Manitoba is purchased from the makers by the merchants, in exchange for store goods. Barter rather than purchase is the proper term to use here. The farmer brings in his butter, eggs, etc., and trades it with the merchant for goods. Sometimes the butter is taken in payment for goods previously purchased; though at the recent retailers' convention it was decided to refuse to take butter on account.

The result of handling butter in this way, in exchange for goods is, that it has become a custom to take all qualities at one price. Merchants have found it practically impossible to discriminate as to the quality of butter. If they were to allow one customer a better price than another, they would be continually giving offence. It is a fact that almost every farmer's wife thinks her butter is just as good as any other persons, and if a merchant would dare to discriminate in this matter, it would be taken as a personal insult by those of his customers whose butter was not up to the mark. The merchant is therefore placed in an awkward position, and it is not a matter for surprise that the one-price system in taking butter has become general. It is about the only thing the merchant could do under the circumstances. A system of inspection whereby the merchant could take the butter according to grade and be relieved himself of the responsibility of fixing the quality, has been talked of; but no practical system of this nature can be devised. If the merchants decide to take butter according to quality, they will themselves have to be the judges of the quality of the article, and this they evidently are not prepared to do.

A result of the one price system for all qualities is, that the farmers have no encouragement to endeavor to make only a superior article of butter. If they take pains to turn out fine butter and are rewarded for it by receiving the same price as is paid for grease, they will soon become careless. Under this system it is therefore no wonder that such a large proportion of the dairy butter reaching our markets is of poor quality. In view of the vast importance of the dairy interests of the country, it is very desirable that something should be done to encourage the farmers to take every pains to make good butter. If properly handled our butter trade should be of great value to the country, but the way it is going now, its value will be largely lost. We might just as well have butter which would bring 15 to 20 cents per pound in outside markets, as stuff which will sell at from 5 to 10 cents per

pound and the latter range is about the value of the bulk of our butter in say eastern markets. The difference represents the loss to the producers.

The first thing necessary to improve the quality of butter is, to purchase it according to quality, and thereby encourage the producers to make as good an article as they can. In order to do this it will probably be necessary to abandon the present mode of handling butter through the stores in exchange for goods, and substitute a system of purchasing for cash. If butter were purchased for cash, the same as wheat, it would be taken according to quality. The buyer in this way would pay what the article was worth, and of course good butter would be worth more than poor stuff. Under this system the merchant would be relieved of handling the article, and he would receive cash, instead of butter, for goods which would otherwise have been bartered in exchange for the commodity. He would be glad to get rid of handling the butter, for it has been anything but a profitable trade for him of late.

Though the one-price system for all qualities is one of the evils of handling butter through the stores, it is not the only evil growing out of the barter system. Another difficulty which this system has led to is the fact that higher prices have been paid for butter than the situation would warrant. Competition between dealers has induced them to advance prices to an unwarrantable extent. A leader has sometimes been made of the price of butter, in order to gain custom. As the article is taken in trade and there is a margin on the goods so traded, merchants have not been as careful to keep prices down to legitimate values. On this account butter transactions have been rendered very unsatisfactory to some dealers. Many of the storekeepers have not the proper accommodation for keeping butter, and the quality is deteriorated before they ship it to market. This is another important reason why a change in the system of handling butter is desirable.

Considering all points it would appear that if the present mode of handling butter through the stores, in exchange for goods, could be abandoned in favor of a system of direct purchase for cash, by regular butter dealers, it would be an advantage to both the farmers and merchants, and a great gain to the country at large. The merchants would be relieved of an unprofitable portion of their business, the farmers would receive encouragement to make a choice article, and the country would gain by the enhanced value of the exportable surplus. The merchants are evidently anxious to be relieved of this truck-and-trade system of doing business. At a recent joint meeting of the business men of Minnedosa, Neepawa and Rapid City, three prosperous towns in the northwestern country, the merchants all agreed to discontinue the handling of butter and other produce, providing parties could be induced to come in and purchase these commodities direct from the farmers for cash. The plan proposed by these merchants is to arrange for say two market days per week at each town, on which days the farmers would come in and dispose of their produce for cash to buyers who would be in attendance. The market days would come in succession at the different points, so that

buyers could go from one place to the other. Unless dealers can be secured to purchase the produce, the scheme will fall through. These proposals are very important in their nature, and they appear perfectly practicable, and likely to be very beneficial to the interests concerned, if they can be carried out. It is to be hoped the move may prove successful, and if so it will lead to the revolutionizing of the produce trade of Manitoba, in a direction which will be in the interest of the country at large.

A BUTTER COMBINE.

A butter combination has been formed at Minneapolis for the purpose of furthering the butter interests of the state of Minnesota. The combination is made up of about twenty creameries. These creameries will all ship their output to Minneapolis, whence it will be distributed to the various markets. The central organization will have charge of the marketing of the butter of the combined creameries, and it is hoped that in this way better results will be attained. If conducted properly, this plan should prove advantageous to the creameries. If the manufacturer attends properly to making the butter and turning out a good article, it is about as much as he can be expected to do. The manufacturer as a rule is not a successful dealer. In this case the manufacturers turn their product over to a central organization, which no doubt will be under the control of a practical commission dealer, who will know where to place it to the best advantage, and at the right time. If Manitoba dairy butter could all be shipped into some central market, while it is fresh, and handled in some such way, it might prove advantageous to dealers and producers.

FEEDING STRAW.

Mr. O'Mallery, member of the Manitoba Legislature, heartily endorses the remarks made in THE COMMERCIAL regarding the custom of burning straw. Mr. O'Mallery is a successful Manitoba farmer, and he knows whereof he speaks. He has not followed the general custom among farmers in this country of burning straw after threshing, in order to get it out of the way. On the other hand he has preserved his straw, and this year it has come in very useful. Some of his stock have been fed on straw this winter, and have come through in good order. He had some straw four years old on his farm. This he did not use himself, but he gave it to some neighbors who were short of feed, and they have since informed him that it made very good feed, and had helped them out a good deal. If farmers had used a little forethought in this matter, and had preserved their straw, there would have been little trouble about a shortage of feed this winter. Now that they have had a lesson, they should apply it, and thus save themselves from any possibility of a shortage of feed in the future.

ARBOR DAY FOR MANITOBA.

The *Manitoba Gazette* contains a proclamation fixing the eighth day of May as a public holiday to be observed as Arbor Day. The proclamation urges all the inhabitants of the province to set apart the day for the planting of forest and other trees, and asks all municipal, religious and school corporations to assist in carrying out the objects for the attainment of which this holiday has been instituted. It is to be hoped that the day will be observed for the purpose appointed, and not merely as a holiday, as has been the case so largely in the past. In this prairie country there is nothing which we need more than trees to improve the appearance of our surroundings. Farmers especially as a rule are very careless about beautifying their premises. A few trees planted each year about buildings and in other places would soon add greatly to the appearance of the country, and besides would be of much real value to the property whereon they were grown.