

in duties upon imports. The reciprocity policy of the late republican government is not in favor with the present administration. The reduction of duties at home, rather than seeking reciprocity treaties and tariff compacts with foreign countries, is now the policy to be followed. With these clear instructions, delegates of the Winnipeg board will be in a position to take a sound stand, and set forth a policy upon the tariff question with practically the unanimous consent of business community which they represent.

Next to the tariff the question of waterways is of vast importance to the people on each side of the boundary, in this part of the continent. This is one of the questions which will be earnestly discussed, and regarding which there is no room for differences of opinion. A deeper navigable channel from the head of the lakes to tide water, is a matter of vital interest to the northwestern states and this portion of Canada. People on each side of the boundary are equally interested in this matter, and every effort should be made to press the necessities of the case upon the proper authorities.

The convention is to be non-political in its nature. It will be composed largely, though not exclusively of delegates from commercial bodies, and the discussions throughout are certain to be of a harmonious and friendly nature. The result therefore cannot do otherwise than assist in cultivating a friendly feeling between the commercial interests on either side of the boundary. If nothing beyond this is accomplished, the convention will not be in vain, though the mere discussion of the tariff, waterways, and other questions of international interest, cannot otherwise than be of beneficial influence.

### COMMERCIAL CONVENTION.

It would appear that the business community of Manitoba have not much interest at the moment in the question of holding a commercial convention in Winnipeg during exhibition week, in July next, as only two or three have responded to our invitation for expressions of opinion on the matter. A short time ago a correspondent wrote urging that an effort be made to hold another commercial convention in Winnipeg. We proposed exhibition week as a desirable time, as a great many business men will be in the city about that time. However, unless there is a mere general desire for a gathering of this nature than has yet been expressed, it would not be worth while making an effort to bring about such an event. There are many questions which could be discussed, which are of general interest to the business people of the country, and the mere discussion of these questions would result in good, by spreading information and brightening up ideas. We believe that if a convention could be held annually, it would be a great help, in placing business upon a better basis throughout the country. However, in order to make the thing a success, business men must take a lively interest in the matter.

### EARLY CLOSING.

THE COMMERCIAL has recently discussed the question of the early closing of stores, and we will not now go into the matter at length.

Those in favor of early closing may not all be aware that there is an act upon the statutes of Manitoba which provides for the early closing of stores. The act is of a local option nature, and can be brought into force in any town within the province, by the adoption of a local by-law in accordance with the provisions of the act. The act has been in force in the town of Portage la Prairie for some time, and this is how the *Liberal* newspaper of that town speaks of it:—

"The early closing system has been in force in Portage la Prairie since last fall, and gives the very best of satisfaction to both merchants and their employees. Prior to the first of January last a petition was circulated by the early closing association of the town, and the signatures secured of two-thirds of the local merchants. Acting upon the request of this petition the town council passed a by-law requiring all stores, except places which must remain open, such as drug stores, etc., to close at 6.30 every evening, excepting Saturday and days before holidays, for which the hour was fixed at ten o'clock. The by-law came into force upon the first of January last. Previous to that time for some months the stores had closed at 7.30. There is a fine of \$50 for violation of the by-law. The scheme is found to work admirably, and gives general satisfaction, and we hope to see it adopted throughout the province."

### What Early-Closing Merchants Say.

Within the last few years the industrial world has become convinced that eight to ten hours' work per day is enough for any man; but notwithstanding the progress and force of public opinion the early-closing movement amongst retailers of Toronto and other large cities throughout the Dominion has thus far been only a partial success. Those merchants who have adopted the system of early closing have nearly all adhered to it; the majority of our largest retail stores have long ago adopted it, and we have yet to learn that the proprietors have suffered any pecuniary loss thereby. As the time is nigh at hand when retail merchants' associations usually consider this subject with a view to closing early, at least during the mid-summer months, we, perhaps, cannot do better than quote the following statements of leading Toronto and Hamilton merchants as to their experience in closing up at 6 o'clock every evening in the week—these practical testimonies are probably the best answers to all the familiar objections usually offered by retailers against early closing.

In their regular advertisement in the daily papers the other day the T. Eaton Company, of this city, make the following impressive deliverance on "Early Closing":—"The world has run around a cycle of years since merchants could afford to be indifferent to the welfare of salespeople, or independent of public opinion. There was a time when nobody closed at six o'clock at night, but we always meant to get tired in ten hours, and the years of small beginnings echo the sentiments we express to-day. Early closing is something more than mere sentiment. It is the application of sincerity in business—considering the interests of salespeople in connection with the best interests of customers. There's no reasonable reason why stores shouldn't close early every day in the week. We have tested the matter carefully and fully endorse this conclusion."

"For instance, isn't this the prevailing notion of a good salesman?—To be bright and clean-looking, to have a good face, a pleasant manner, to be modest but confident, ready and self-possessed, cheerful, cheery, polite, to take pleasure in giving pleasure, to adapt oneself to his customer, to carry the whole of one's stock in his head, to catch a customer's want

or notion or whim in a minute, to welcome service, to seem to have no end of strength and time and patience, to devote oneself to a dozen, twenty, forty customers one after another, and to consider the business of selling as if that were what the world turns on? And isn't it the customary notion that salesmen (and saleswomen) should work twelve, fourteen or fifteen hours if necessary—as long as there is possible trade to be got?"

"The means of communication are better and quicker to-day than ever before,—apparently about as good as they can be. Every shopper of every circumstance can do her buying between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.—if they care to. And almost nobody will object to a little inconvenience when the interests of many thousand salespeople are at stake. In regard to early closing we mean to lend our whole influence in its favor. Without any regard to what others might do, we long ago adopted shorter work days for this store,—and business grows and grows in spite of that."

F. W. Watkins, of Pratt & Watkins, Hamilton, in a very instructive, readable letter on another page of this paper, gives the following advice on this question:—"Close on Saturday evenings at six o'clock. In face of doing the largest business in Hamilton, on Saturday night I resolved to close as early as on other days. I do not regret it. I would not go back to the old system under any consideration. My employees and I have better health; I do a larger and more satisfactory business now than under the old method of keeping open late, and everybody likes the new way best. Customers can be educated to buy their goods in the daytime; some few may be lost, but I consider that the trade will be made up in other ways. For example: we have instituted Monday as a 'bargain day,' which helps to keep up our sales."

In the presence of these testimonies of experience, how can retail dealers longer maintain that if they close their stores earlier they would suffer by loss of business? It has been proven that the greater portion of the public are in sympathy with early closing, and will make their purchases earlier in the day if they know by so doing they enable the storekeepers and their assistants to quit work at a reasonable hour. Apart from the question of sentiment it is only necessary that the retailers of all the towns and cities shall determine to close at a certain hour, then notify their customers accordingly, and carry out their decision without deviation. Surely retail dealers are ready to demand for themselves and their employees the consideration to which the poorest workman in America is entitled! We fear the main obstacle to early closing throughout the country is the lack of organization in the various branches of the retail trade. If the majority of retail dealers in the various branches of trade organize themselves and decide to close early, the minority will soon be compelled by the force of public opinion to follow their example, and the senseless competition, which compels so many shopkeepers to keep open until the streets are almost deserted, and all nature is gone to rest, will be done away with. Is it any wonder that many retail merchants complain of the great difficulty in getting young men as clerks, considering the number of hours clerks in small stores are expected to work? It is not surprising to find bright young men averse to becoming "counter-hoppers." They are usually paid by the week or month, and considering the number of hours they work their wages are by no means equal to those of many other young men who are no more skilled or intelligent, and who only work eight hours a day. It is not surprising, therefore, that when comparing themselves with those of other departments, they gradually but surely lose interest in their business, and are ever on the lookout for a more desirable situation. The sooner small retailers follow the example of the larger stores, and adopt the early closing movement, the better it will be for themselves, their families and their employees.—*Toronto Merchant.*