

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 29, 1896.

A TYRANNICAL ORDER.

A Montreal paper says that the banks and some of the largest mercantile houses have forbidden their employees to invest in mining shares. How dare they do anything of the kind, or what right have they to interfere with the personal liberty of their employees in such an arbitrary manner? If this statement is true, it is a scandalous piece of tyranny. A business man has no right to dictate to his employees in such an arbitrary manner, and no reasonable person would undertake to do so. Business men should certainly take an active interest in those who are in their employ, and at times they might be permitted to advise them, but they have no right to make arbitrary rules calculated to control the personal liberties of their employees in legitimate matters. The purchasing of mining shares is not an offence against any moral or civil law, and the clerk who has any money to spare is often in a better position to invest it in mining shares than his employer. He has no business interests upon which he would bring disaster should he meet with a heavy loss. A wise and thoughtful merchant, while keeping an eye upon the moral and social habits of his employees, will not endeavor to impose upon the individual liberties of those who to some extent may be dependent upon him. Liberty is as sweet to the clerk as to the merchant, and is the right of one as much as the other. Tyrannical restrictions are not calculated to induce pleasant relations between merchants and their employees, and are certainly not calculated to secure the best attention from employees to the interests of the merchant.

PROPOSED WINNIPEG WATER-WORKS.

The impression has gained currency in the city, regarding the proposal to establish a new system of water-works in Winnipeg, that the council has undertaken to submit the by-law without first securing any information regarding the proposed sources of water supply. This is a great mistake. The council is certainly to blame in not having made more extended investigations before deciding to submit the by-law; and it would have been better to have postponed taking the vote on the by-law for a time, rather than risk its defeat. At the same time it must not be supposed that the city officers have not made extended inquiries into this matter.

The Commercial was led into the error that no special information had been obtained upon this subject, owing to remarks made by an alderman at a meeting of the city council, but upon investigation we find that the city engineer has made very extended investigations into the artesian well supply, and the information gained in this direction is quite exhaustive. It shows quite conclusively that the supply of water available from this source is abundant, and the quality of the water is also shown by chemical analyses to be good.

Anyone who will take the trouble to look up the information in the hands of the city engineer, will find that the artesian well supply has been quite thoroughly investigated. This information should be widely distributed among the people before the date expires for voting on the by-law to raise a sum of money for carrying out the proposed work.

It will be freely admitted by almost every one, that the city is badly in need of a first-class system of water-works. This is something which should belong to the city, and which every progressive and well regulated city should be in possession of. It is necessary for the public health that the water-works should be controlled by the city. The proper administration of the health department and the cleanliness of the city require that the city should own a system of water-works. Winnipeg is in anything but a good sanitary condition. A proper system of flushing the sewers has never been attempted, and even in the closely built up portions of the city a large number of buildings have neither drainage nor water connections. This undesirable state of things will not be remedied until the city controls an efficient system of water-works.

The opponents of the by-law talk about the heavy debt which will be incurred in establishing the proposed works. This is an altogether harmless scarecrow. The proposed debt will not increase taxation. In fact an efficient system of water-works, properly managed, should help to reduce the taxes of the citizens. In a city the size of Winnipeg, a large revenue should be derived from the water-works, over and above the cost of operating and maintenance, after paying the interest on the cost of the works. The city should be able to supply water at considerably lower rates than are at present charged by the private company, and still have a surplus over all costs of operating the works. This would be a great saving to the citizens. There should also be important reductions in the cost of maintaining the fire department and doing the scavenging work of the city, while the sanitary condition of the city could be vastly improved. Instead of increasing taxation, the expenditure of half a million or more in a system of water-works should prove a very profitable investment for the city.

It is not too soon to begin to prepare for the establishment of a new system of water-works in Winnipeg. The franchise of the present private water-works company expires in 1900. This gives us four seasons in which to establish a new system and have it ready for operation by the time the present monopoly expires. Of course a new system could be established in less time than four years; but the work can be done much more cheaply by spreading it over a few years than by rushing it through in a hurry. There is also another important point, namely; affording employment to our home labor population. If the work is rushed through, a foreign labor population will be brought in, who will leave the city when the work is done, while by carrying out the work more slowly, steady employment will be furnished to our permanent labor population. Another good reason why the work should be undertaken at once, is on

account of the proposed street improvements. On all streets which it is decided to pave the water mains should first be put down, so as to avoid tearing up the streets after they are paved. It is useless talking about commencing a comprehensive system of paving if the pavement is to be destroyed, or at least badly damaged a short time after it is put down, by tearing up the streets for the water mains.

One thing the city must be prepared for, and that is to have a system of water-works ready by the time the present monopoly expires. It is not too soon to take hold of the matter vigorously, and there is nothing to be gained in shirking the issue. The passage of the by-law will not hinder the council from securing any further information which it may be necessary or desirable to procure.

So far as the present private company is concerned, The Commercial would favor the taking over of all or any portions of the plant which will fit in with the proposed new system, providing reasonable terms can be made with the company. It is certainly not in the interest of the city that the stockholders in the present company should be put to any unnecessary loss, and besides, any heavy loss to the present company would tend to retard the investment of capital in the country.

It is a matter for much regret that the municipal reforms so much talked of have not been carried out, so that the city would be in a better position to take hold of the water-works question as well as other needed improvements. The most valid objection urged against passing this water-works by-law is the argument that under our loose municipal system we have no reason to hope that the work would be properly managed. We have labored for years and brought forth nothing in the direction of civic reform. If we go on as we have in the past it may be many years in the future before anything practical is accomplished in the direction of civic reform. This is a matter which the citizens should attend to at the polls. If no urgent public improvements are to be undertaken until a more satisfactory municipal system has been established, then let us force the municipal reforms at once. On the other hand, if we cannot do anything but talk reforms, then we had better try and secure some urgent civic works under the existing system. Other cities have established water-works under the same municipal system as we have, and why not Winnipeg?

THE BUSINESS MEN'S CONVENTION.

The proposal emanating from the Winnipeg board of trade, in favor of a business men's convention to be held in Winnipeg, is meeting with general approval from business men throughout the West. The board sent out cards to a large number of business men in Manitoba and the Territories, asking their opinion as to the advisability of holding the proposed convention. Replies have come in very freely, the answers showing that business men generally throughout the West are in favor of the convention, and a good many have signified their intention of being present. The date suggested by the Winnipeg board has been generally approved. The date mentioned is in February next, just previous to