

the oppressive duties, which bear more heavily upon the Northwest than upon any other part of Canada, though the people here are the least able to bear the burden. However desirous it may be that the burden of oppressive duties should be alleviated, the people of this country should consider very carefully before falling in with a movement which might prove to them the truth of the saying, "out of the frying-pan into the fire."

WESTERN CONNECTION.

Undoubtedly the most important phase of the railway situation in Manitoba at present is the question of western connection. Work has progressed so steadily and without interruption upon the Red River Valley road to the boundary that the people now begin to look upon it as an accomplished fact. It is at once recognized, however, both by the citizens of Winnipeg and those of the outlying portions of the province, that unless railway competition can be extended throughout the province, the usefulness of the Red River Valley road will be very largely lost. After expending wealth and energy in breaking the C. P. R. monopoly to the south and east, it would be an ill-advised policy which would urge that no further efforts should be made to extend the blessings of railway competition to all parts of the province. It is certainly not the policy of the business men of Winnipeg that the efforts to destroy railway monopoly should cease with the completion of the Red River road. On the contrary, the very first outlines of a scheme for the speedy extension of railway competition to the western portions of the province, were considered and detailed at a meeting of the Winnipeg Board of Trade.

The people of the city and the province at large being practically a unit in the desire for the extension of railway competition westward, the next thing to consider is how to speedily and effectually bring this about. The scheme outlined by the Board of Trade, referred to above, is that a line of railway should be constructed from the terminus of the Red River Valley road at Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie, to connect at the latter place with the Manitoba & Northwestern. Thus by the construction of a short connecting link, railway competition would be at once introduced to a large portion of the province. The Winnipeg Board of Trade further favored the extension of

the Saskatchewan & Western Railway from its present terminus at Rapid City to Brandon, thereby giving the latter important distributing point the benefit of competition. This is about all which could be accomplished during the present season, and, if carried out a vast benefit would accrue to the province.

At the last meeting of the Local Legislature the Winnipeg & Western Railway Company was chartered for the purpose of constructing the connecting link between Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie. This company has made a proposition to the Government to at once construct the line provided a bonus be granted in aid of the work to the amount of \$200,000.

Another proposition has been made to the effect that a portion of the Hudson's Bay Railway, now constructed to a point beyond Shoal Lake, should be utilized in reaching Portage la Prairie, or some other point on the Manitoba & Northwestern. By utilizing a portion of the Hudson's Bay road only about thirty-five miles of new road would require to be constructed to complete the link, but the route would be considerably longer than the proposed Winnipeg and Western, and also longer than the C.P.R.

So far as can be learned, public opinion both in Winnipeg and the western towns, is strongly in favor of the construction of the Winnipeg and Western, in preference to the connection via the Hudson's Bay road, and many strong arguments can be adduced in favor of the former route. In the first place it is known that the Winnipeg and Western would be more direct than the C.P.R., which latter route is ten miles shorter than the proposed route via the Hudson's Bay road, thus giving it exceptional advantages for competing with the C.P.R. The Winnipeg and Western would also open up a new country on the south side of the Assiniboine river, now but slightly settled, owing to lack of railway facilities. These are not the only advantages in favor of the direct line to Portage la Prairie, on the south side of the Assiniboine, though they are of sufficient importance to warrant a decision in its favor. The offer of the promoters of the Winnipeg and Western is a reasonable one, and they are moreover willing to build the line at once, merely upon receiving the assurance that the Government will advise the House at its next meeting, in favor of granting the aid asked for.

The question of bridging the Assi-

boine river has been made one of the important points in connection with the different proposals. Those urging the adoption of the northern route have endeavored to make it appear that the Winnipeg and Western Company would have difficulty in crossing the river, as the Dominion Government, which has control over navigable streams, would throw obstacles in the way. It is claimed that the Hudson's Bay Railway Company would have power to bridge the river under its Dominion charter, and thus a point is made in favor of the northern route. Investigation, however, shows clearly that there is really nothing in the contention. There has been no hint at the disallowance by the Dominion Government of the charter of the Winnipeg and Western, and under that charter the Company would have equal power with the Hudson's Bay Company. Besides, there are other ways to get over the difficulty, though it is not at all likely that the Dominion would adopt such an arbitrary course as to endeavor to obstruct the building of a bridge. So far as the eastern terminus of the road is concerned, the Winnipeg City Council could probably be prevailed upon to allow the use of one of the bridges now constructed, should other means fail, though it would be less likely to grant the same privilege to the tortuous northern route.

Though no formal announcement of the policy of the Government regarding western connection has yet been made, it would nevertheless seem that some movement is on foot in Government circles in favor of the route via the Hudson's Bay line. What the understanding is, if such exists, it is difficult to learn, but there is certainly something in the air, as indicated by the action of the Government organ at Winnipeg, which has suddenly come out as a strong advocate of the longer route. It is further intimated that the Government has decided upon a general policy in the matter. It will be a matter for regret if the Government have decided upon assisting the longer route, against the almost unanimous wishes of the people interested. It will be a further matter for regret should it be learned that the Government have privately determined upon a line of action in such an important matter, without taking the public into its confidence. Such a course would certainly be taken as indicating something in the nature of a job, and at any rate would be an unwise line of action to follow.