

# THE COMMERCIAL

A Journal of Commerce, Industry and Finance, especially devoted to the interests of 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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Publisher.

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 Canada, daily or weekly. By a thorough system of personal solicitation, carried out annually, this journal has been placed upon the desks of the majority of business men in the district designated above, including Northwest Ontario, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia, and the Territories of Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 8, 1897.

## WINNIPEG WATER WORKS

A very full discussion of the Winnipeg water works question was had at a special meeting of the Winnipeg board of trade, held Monday last. At the meeting a resolution from the council of the board was submitted. This resolution was given in The Commercial last week. It endorsed the artesian well system, declared in favor of a commission to manage the construction and operation of the works, and asked that the question of the purchase of any portion of the existing system be left to the commission.

As regards the first point, popular opinion seems to be very largely in favor of accepting the decision of the experts in favor of an artesian well system. The third point, regarding the purchase of any portion of the existing system is also a matter which evidently should be left to expert opinion to decide. The average citizen, with the knowledge which he may be able to gain of this question in the ordinary way, can hardly come to a safe conclusion upon this point. Whether the work be constructed by commission or by the council direct, the opinion of experts will have to be mainly relied upon as to what may be done regarding the existing system.

The question as to a commission however, is a business matter upon

which any intelligent business man or other person is capable of forming an opinion for himself. The Commercial is most decidedly in favor of a commission. The council is an elective body, varying from year to year, while there would be a continuity about the commission. The Commercial would further urge, that the conditions existing under our system of civic government, are not such as to render the circumstances favorable to the construction of large civic works to the best advantage. The construction of such an important work not only requires engineering skill, but also close and continuous supervision of a business nature, from a capable person or persons. This is lacking under our municipal system. The Commercial will not enter into any discussion of the matter at length, but we certainly favor the principle of a commission for the water works construction, composed of thoroughly competent persons.

## A FEATURE OF STRIKES

It is reported from London that a strike of cotton operatives is imminent. It is to be hoped means will be found for averting the disaster, for such it would certainly prove. In these days of intense commercial rivalry a prolonged strike in such an important industry would certainly be taken advantage of by Britain's rivals to injure British export trade. While the strike itself would cause immense direct loss to all concerned, the indirect loss of trade through the opportunity given to rivals to seize foreign markets, would perhaps be the worst feature of the situation.

The trouble is over a five per cent. reduction in wages, which the employers say is absolutely necessary. In fact they say that in the present state of the markets there should be a reduction of ten per cent. to enable them to make a profit. It is always a difficult matter, however, to convince operatives of the necessity for a reduction in wages.

## TARIFF PECULIARITIES

What appears to be an anomalous situation in tariff matters is the duty on oats and oatmeal. The duty on oats is ten cents per bushel, and on oatmeal it is 20 per cent ad valorem. It takes four and a half to five bushels of oats to make a sack of oatmeal. The duty on the oats necessary to make a sack of meal would, therefore, be 45 to 50 cents, while at the present price of meal in the United States, the duty on the meal would be about 20 cents.

On account of the high price of oats here compared with other markets, Manitoba oatmeal millers are at a great disadvantage this season. Mil-

lars in Ontario are buying their oats about one-third cheaper than the price of oats here, while the price of oats in Winnipeg is almost double their value at Minneapolis or Chicago. If we must import, it would be better to bring in the oats for milling here and thus keep an important local industry busy, instead of bringing in the meal. It is a pity the tariff could not be arranged to allow of this, temporarily at least. Oats at Minneapolis carry local freights from northern and northwestern points. About the same freight charge would bring them to Winnipeg, from Red river valley points south of the boundary. If the tariff could be arranged to admit oats for milling purposes, no doubt Manitoba millers would be placed in a position to obtain a supply of material which would enable them to compete successfully with outside mills.

## UNNECESSARILY WIDE

A newspaper paragraph says the Portage road is being surveyed preparatory to transferring it from the Dominion to the local government. The object of the survey is to allow of giving a proper description of river lots adjacent thereto. The Portage road is the principal highway leading out of Winnipeg, and it was originally the main trail leading from Winnipeg westward as far as Portage la Prairie. The point The Commercial wishes to make in connection with the transfer of this road to the provincial government is the unwieldy width of the highway. There is no advantage in having such a wide road that we can think of, but there are some disadvantages. In a country where land is so abundant and cheap, it would be perhaps superfluous to speak of the waste of land entailed by our wide roads. At the same time there certainly is a great unnecessary waste of land in these wide country roads. Another point against wide roads is the field which they afford for producing crops of weeds. In wet weather the road-side is cut up by wagons, and thus a place is made for the growth of weeds. It would be a saving to the municipalities to have the wide roads materially reduced. If about half the width of this Portage road were handed back to the property owners along the highway, it would be a benefit to all concerned.

## BICYCLE NUISANCE

The bicycle bell is one of the nuisances of Winnipeg. The law compelling bicyclists to ring a bell, in certain cases, is a most absurd enactment. The bell is a very useful attachment to the bicycle, but its use should be restricted. It is useful when one rider desires to pass another, thereby giving warning to the rider ahead to