

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 26, 1896.

MANITOBA WHEAT CROP

The Manitoba department of agriculture has issued a revised statement of the wheat crop of the province which makes a material reduction in the yield. Following is the revised statement:

District.	Area in Crop.	Yield. Per Acre.	Total Yield
Northwestern	70,295	17.33	1,218,212
Southwestern	457,665	15.31	7,006,851
North Central	196,638	14.5	2,764,251
South Central	227,400	11.9	2,706,060
Eastern	53,600	12.62	676,432

Province 999,598 14.5 14,371,805

The earlier estimate made an average yield of 18.57 bushels per acre and a total crop of 18,565,198 bushels.

The revised statement deals with wheat only. If oats had been likewise dealt with, it is probable that the yield would have been reduced to even a greater percentage than has been the case with wheat.

The figures of the wheat crop given above are for the Province of Manitoba only. There are no figures available for the Territories, but with the latter added, the total crop for our wheat belt would be not far from 20,000,000 bushels.

NO CHANGE OF WHEAT GRADES.

The first action of the standards board after it assembled in Winnipeg on Wednesday last, Oct. 21, was to consider the question of the changes in the wheat grades as announced by the department of inland revenue. Before the changes would go into effect, they have to be published four times in the official Gazette. Three publications had already been given, and the fourth one should appear in the usual order on Oct. 24. It was understood that if the standards board opposed the changes, that the department would withhold the further publication, so that no changes would be made this year.

The standards board after going into the matter fully promptly decided that it would not be advisable to make the changes in the grades. The board was almost unanimous on this point, only two members, both of whom are Manitoba Farmers' Institute men, (Messrs. Elder and Postlethwaite), voting for the changes. The board, however, asked that scoured wheat be not mixed in the grades of No. 1 and No. 2 hard and No. 1 Northern. Under the old regulations scoured wheat was permitted in all but the No. 1 hard grade. Following is the resolution passed by the board:

"Moved by Mr. Underhill, seconded by Mr. McQueen. "Resolved, that this standards board recommend to the controller of inland revenue that the changes in the classification of grain grades now being gazetted in the Canada Gazette be not put in force and that the department instruct all inspectors to permanently exclude scoured wheat from the grades of No. 1 and No. 2 hard and No. 1 Northern."

The action of the standards board fully confirms the course taken by the Commercial in regard to the proposed changes in the grades. The farmers had a major-

ity of one on the board, and the resolution represents the views of the farmers regarding the matter. It is to be hoped the department will now act promptly and save the grain trade of the country from the state of chaos into which it would be thrown by its decision to change the grades at such an unreasonable time.

The action of the Winnipeg board of trade in sending Secretary Bell to Ottawa to expostulate with the department has been productive of good results after all. It was through the action of the board of trade that the department was induced to agree to stop the enforcement of the proposed changes in the grades if the standards board should decide against the changes.

PRAIRIE FIRES

In view of the great loss from prairie fires each year, it is worth while considering if more stringent regulations could not be made with a view of reducing the number of fires. The present law is quite plain and also provides severe punishment for the starting of fires, but notwithstanding this it is generally admitted that most fires are the result of carelessness and neglect. Quite a number of destructive fires have occurred from burning straw, after threshing, through neglect to provide proper guards to prevent the fire from spreading to the prairie. Parties who allowed fires to escape in this way have in a few cases been compelled to pay heavy costs for the damages done, but this has not proved a sufficient warning to others, and the neglect still goes on. Perhaps the law regarding the starting of fires is not generally understood throughout the country, though the department has taken special pains this season to distribute printed copies of the act throughout the province. The act should be placed in every postoffice in the province and municipal officials to whom copies of the act have been sent, should see that this is done. Of course legislative enactments cannot accomplish everything that is desired. What is required is a lively interest on the part of the people in seeing that the law is enforced. The law says that any one who allows a fire to escape from his property through carelessness, is liable to a fine, etc., yet people all over the country set fire to their straw piles after threshing, without taking any precaution to prevent the fire from spreading. The regulations might be made more stringent by providing that no one should set a pile of straw or other similar material on fire without first providing a proper guard around the material which it was proposed to burn; and contravention of such provision should have a penalty attached, whether or not the fire escaped to other property. Still, the matter depends mainly upon the people themselves, and legislative enactment no matter how stringent, cannot accomplish much without the hearty approval and support of the people.

One thing, however, which might be done to improve the present regulations, would be to provide for the putting out of fires after they have been started. Fires are frequently allowed to burn for days without any effort being made to extinguish them. While the weather is calm there is no great danger, but at any moment a strong wind may come up and then much property is liable to be destroyed. It might be advisable to make

it compulsory that municipalities should take active measures to put out all fires as soon as they were observed, whether or not there was any immediate danger. This could be carried out by having fire guardians appointed in every neighborhood, who would have authority to summon the residents of the locality to assist them in extinguishing fires. If this were done, many fires could be extinguished while the weather was favorable, which if allowed to run, as they often are, would prove destructive in case of a brisk wind arising.

It has been suggested that the municipalities should be compelled to plow fire guards. The objection to this is that these guards would provide an excellent place for the propagation of noxious weeds. In many municipalities the public roads are not kept free from weeds, and it is not desirable to provide further breeding places for weeds. A better plan would be to burn guards, if a proper machine for this purpose could be had. Machines for burning fire guards are now obtainable and if it can be shown that these machines are efficient, it would, perhaps, be a wise thing to make it compulsory upon the municipalities to burn fire guards.

THE ELEVATOR SYSTEM

The excellent elevator system which Manitoba enjoys has proved of great advantage to the farmers of the country this season. During the recent railway strike, when railway traffic was demoralized, the farmers would have been obliged to stop marketing their grain but for the fine elevator system, which afforded room to accommodate all the grain offered. Even after the strike the rush of grain to market was so enormous that the railways were taxed to their utmost capacity to take the grain away fast enough to keep space in the elevators for further receipts. Without this elevator system Manitoba would be in bad shape every fall when the rush of grain begins. As it is the farmer can store his grain in the elevators more cheaply than he could provide storage at his farm for his crop; and he has the further advantage that if he stores in an elevator he can take advantage of any advance in the market to sell his grain in a lump. This he could not do if he stored at his farm, as it might take him weeks to have his grain hauled to market, while grain stored in a railway elevator is marketable in a lump at any time. A few persons have tried at times to stir up an agitation against what they allege to be an elevator monopoly. Demagogic motives have, no doubt, been at the bottom of much of this talk. The wise and thoughtful farmer however, who, no doubt, fully appreciates the advantage of the elevators, will refuse to allow professional agitators and demagogues to make capital for themselves, and a tool of him, by crediting their rantings regarding the alleged elevator grievances. There is not a shadow of an elevator monopoly in Manitoba. The regulations regarding elevators, which have led to the establishing of our present efficient expeditious and inexpensive system of handling grain, have proved an inestimable boon to the farmers of this country. The main concern of those who are hunting up alleged grievances is to further their personal aims and ambitions. The farmer who will give these people a wide birth and make the best use of the