

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, DECEMBER 5, 1892.

CHANGES AT OTTAWA.

After a prolonged period of uncertainty, it has at last been officially announced that Premier Abbott has resigned, and Sir John Thompson has been called upon to form a new cabinet. There is nothing in the nature of a surprise in this. The resignation of Sir John Abbott has been expected for some time, owing to poor health, and it was a foregone conclusion that Sir John Thompson would be his successor. As matters go, the country at large has no reason to take exception to the call upon Sir John Thompson to form a new cabinet. In contracted denominational circles there may be some objection to the new premier. There should, however, be no room for denominational bigotry in this matter, and the good sense of the Canadian people will no doubt promptly suppress any attempts which may possibly be made to arouse any feeling on such grounds. Sir John Thompson is entitled to the position, and is probably the best available man (in the dictation of party) to step into the shoes of Sir John Abbott.

It is not to be expected that there will be any immediate and important changes in the programme of the government, as a result of the resignation of the prime minister. As heretofore, the policy of the government will be shaped in accordance with outside public, rather than inward personal influences. In the matter of trade and tariff, the tendency of the times will no doubt lead to a gradual modification of the present protective policy. Any tariff changes are more likely to be in the nature of reduced duties, rather than in the direction of greater protection. It has been stated that the department of trade and commerce, which was provided for by act of parliament some years ago, but never carried into effect, will now be established. The actual value of such a department to the commerce of the country is of course a matter of considerable uncertainty, but it might be made to serve some useful purposes. At any rate, it would indicate that the government recognizes the need of giving closer attention to the great question of commerce.

MULOTING THE BUSINESS INTERESTS.

Intense opposition has been aroused in Montreal to the enforcement of the new provincial tax law of Quebec province. This law bears heavily upon the commercial interests of Montreal, and it is feared that it will have serious results, in driving business institutions from the city to competing points in Ontario.

Through the extravagance and mismanagement of provincial affairs, the government of the province has found it absolutely necessary to secure new sources of revenue. This has been undertaken by a special tax upon commerce. The government is maintained in power in a province like Quebec, by the votes of the farmers. A tax upon land would not suit the farmers, who have the voting power, and therefore the government has hit upon the idea of a

special tax upon the business interests. The business men have decided, it is reported, to resist the new taxes. Lawyers consulted have submitted opinion on the question the effect of which is that the act does not come within the scope of the powers granted to local legislatures under the British North America act, which leaves the regulation of trade and commerce exclusively to the Dominion parliament. The government may therefore yet be compelled to seek some more equitable way of raising additional revenue. Business men do not object to bear their reasonable share of taxation, but they should not be made the milch cow for the whole community, as they also are to a considerable extent in our usual municipal system of taxation.

WINNIPEG WATERWORKS.

The Winnipeg council, though handling the question very tardily, has at last made a preliminary move in the direction of establishing a system of waterworks under civic control. The necessity for this has long been apparent. While Winnipeg has not been entirely without a water system, the matter of supplying the city with water has been in the hands of a corporate company. The supply of water for all civic purposes has therefore not been as abundant as required. Some negotiations have been carried on between the city and the company for the purchase by the former of the existing works. These, however, appear to have been broken off, for notice has now been given that the electors will be called upon to vote upon a by law to provide the sum of \$400,000 to establish a new civic water system. This we think is regrettable. It would be greatly in the interest of the city, if a reasonable arrangement could be come to for the purchase of the existing system. The great inconvenience and loss of having the streets torn up again, where water mains are already down, and the cost of making new connections with buildings is a serious matter to the citizens. If the present system could be purchased by the city, on at all reasonable terms, and extended to meet our requirements, it would be vastly better than to undertake a new system. It would be preferable to pay even more than the present system is actually worth, as a matter of dollars, rather than undergo the disagreeableness of establishing a new system. Besides, there is some doubt as to the right of the city to establish a water system, in view of the franchise of the present company. A plan of arbitration has been provided for, to determine the question of price of the present system in transferring it to the city. This seems the only fair way to settle the matter. Nearly all citizens will admit that it would be in the interest of the city to acquire the present works, rather than establish a new system. A plan of arbitration having been provided, why should not it be gone on with, with a view to acquiring the works in this way?

BINDER TWINE.

Very little has been heard for some time about the proposed binder twine factory in Winnipeg. Last spring it was believed we were to have at least one factory established at once, and perhaps two. A local company was

understood to have made some progress toward arranging to establish a factory here, and besides this it was quite definitely understood that the Consumers' Cordage Co., which operates factories in eastern Canada, would establish a branch factory in Winnipeg. The season, however, wore by without anything practical having been done, and the question seems to have gradually dropped out of sight.

The consumption of binder twine in Manitoba and the settled agricultural portions of the territories, is very large. It is one of the principal things which our farmers require every year, in order to enable them to carry on their work. As to the demand for the commodity, there is no reason for doubt. The market is at hand, and the demand is certain to be largely increased from year to year, in keeping with the rapid settlement of the country. The cost of manufacturing the twine here is an important matter which would have to be taken into consideration. On this point only a person of great experience in the business, and one who would have full knowledge as to the conditions existing here, could speak with authority. We have been assured, however, by some who have looked into the matter, that the manufacture of twine might be carried on to good advantage in Winnipeg.

The manufacture of binder twine in Canada is protected against foreign competition by a customs duty. This is one feature which has to be taken into consideration in connection with the proposal to establish a factory here. The question is: is the duty likely to remain for any length of time? There has been a strong agitation in favor of the removal of this duty. It is a matter which bears directly upon the farmers, and farmers have votes. If the farmers should unanimously demand that the duty be removed, previous to an election, it would likely have to go. In fact, there is already such a strong feeling upon this binder twine question, that it has been proposed in eastern Canada to establish farmers' companies to manufacture twine. Two or three such enterprises are now on foot in Ontario. A paper published at Hamilton, Ontario, says:—

"The binder twine industry has ever been a sore one for farmers. It is understood that the Patrons of Industry hereabout are moving towards this end, and are making preparations to get from under the iron heel of the monopoly, by forming a joint stock company for the making of binder twine. The company will be composed of patrons only, the shares being placed at \$10 each, each patron being allowed to take one share for each 100 acres owned by him. Already a large number of patrons have taken stock. Arrangements have almost been completed for the manufacturing of first quality twine in Hamilton, and the company will be prepared to deliver it at prices that will astonish the average farmer."

The advice of THE COMMERCIAL to farmers has always been to leave undertakings of this kind alone. If the farmers really want free twine, they could force it by their votes, and they would then not have to build factories to overcome the evils they claim now exist.

Regarding the establishment of a factory in Winnipeg by the Consumers' Cordage Company, we understand that the matter rests upon the question of the duty upon twine. If there were any assurance that the present duty upon twine would be maintained for at least a few years, or until such time as the industry could