

THE COMMERCIAL

The recognized authority on all matters pertaining to trade and progress in Western Canada, including that part of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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D. W. BUCHANAN,
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. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 27.

UNSATISFACTORY BUTTER WEIGHTS.

Considerable dissatisfaction exists among Winnipeg produce and commission houses in regard to butter weights. Unpleasantness sometimes arises between country shippers and receivers here in regard to weights, as a result of the present somewhat unsatisfactory system of handling butter. It has been customary in this market to allow six, eight and ten pounds tare for small, medium and large butter packages, respectively, but the experience of the trade goes to show that this tare often does not cover the actual difference between the net and gross weights of butter packages. Many packages of butter reach this market with a quantity of salt placed on top of the butter. It is also known that tubs are frequently soaked with brine until their weight is materially increased. The makers of the butter are evidently up to tricks of this nature to increase the weight of the packages and thus secure the price of butter for an added weight of salt and water. In some cases a quantity of salt has even been found placed in the centre of packages. While no doubt in many cases the farmer or maker of the butter is responsible for this added weight, it is possible that in some cases country shippers have also adopted the same tactics, such as adding salt on top of butter and soaking tubs with brine.

The result of this is, that receivers here have frequently found that the net weight of lots of butter has turned out considerably less than the shippers' weight. On one lot of a few tons handled by a commission house, there was a shrinkage of nearly 500 lbs in the net weight of the butter, after making the usual allowance for weight of packages. Produce dealers contend that they should not be expected to pay butter prices for salt, brine and cloth, and there is a movement on foot to have the custom of butter weights changed, so that payment will only be made for net weight of butter. It is not likely that any change will be made this season, as the bulk of the trade is over for this year, but it is likely that next season a rule will be established to adhere more closely to actual net weights in making returns to country shippers.

In the past this discrepancy in weights was not felt so closely by the

produce houses as it now is. Business now, however, is done on a closer margin than formerly, and any loss in weights is felt more keenly. Another reason is, that the quantity of butter made here has increased and this year there has been a surplus for shipment east. When a dealer here ships a lot of butter to Montreal, for instance, the butter will go through the hands of a public weigher at Montreal, and the actual net weight only will be allowed to the Winnipeg shipper. Dealers here, therefore, think that they should buy on the same basis as they are compelled to sell on, and allow only for the actual net weight, instead of allowing a uniform tare according to the size of packages.

To avoid misunderstandings between country shippers and produce and commission dealers here, country receivers of butter can arrange to take in butter on the same basis. When a customer comes to the store with a package of butter, the contents can be turned out and weighed, and the actual net weight should be marked on the package. If this custom were followed, many misunderstandings between shippers and receivers in regard to weights, would be prevented. In taking in butter from customers, merchants should always draw a sample with the tryer, and any defects, such as lack of uniformity in color, etc., could be pointed out to the maker, with a view to encouraging efforts to improve quality in future.

CHEESE.

A well informed Winnipeg cheese buyer says that there must be in the neighborhood of 300,000 pounds of cheese held yet by factories in Manitoba, which is a large quantity for this time of year. The make has been large this year, and with a further increase in the output next year, there will be more cheese made than will be required for the western market. In fact there is a liberal supply now for the western market, though some Ontario cheese was shipped through to British Columbia earlier in the season. Notwithstanding the increase in the make, buyers have purchased freely at prices very remunerative to the producer. If the cheese industry continues to expand, so that a decided surplus over western requirements is produced, it will evidently mean that keener discrimination as to quality will have to be practiced in buying the Manitoba product. Heretofore almost anything offered in a cheese box has been taken, with little or no discrimination as to quality, and the result has been that the quality of Manitoba cheese has not improved with increasing experience in the industry as it should have done. Where the buyer does not discriminate as to quality, there is not the same encouragement for the producer to try to excel in turning out his goods. Greater discrimination in purchasing would be a good thing for the Manitoba cheese industry, as it would put factorymen on their metal and encourage them to put forth their best efforts in the matter of securing high quality. A lot of poor cheese has been made this season. A Montreal dairy produce man who was here recently, said that the Manitoba cheese industry was in about the same position that the industry in Ontario occupied twenty or more years ago. The Ontario cheese industry has certainly made wonderful progress in twenty years, and what has been accomplished there can be accomplished here, in quality at least, if not in quantity. Quality, at

any rate, is the first thing desirable in the dairy industry, whether it be cheese or butter.

HIGH EXPRESS RATES.

In the course of its weekly rounds of the trading community in Winnipeg The Commercial generally hears a great many things that it would not be wise to use in the way of giving publicity to them, and it is generally only when a matter has become common experience that it is made a subject of remarks in these columns. For a considerable time back the trading community of the west, both in and out of the city, have been complaining in forcible terms of what they are pleased to call the extortionate rates being charged for carriage of parcels by express to the various parts of the west. The complaint is most commonly raised by dealers in low priced lines of goods as they find that a small parcel consigned to a country point will often eat up more than its value in express charges. This, of course, is something that is bound to occur in certain cases where the value of the goods is exceptionally low, but it is claimed by the present complainants that owing to the high rates charged under the present schedule it occurs entirely too often, to the exclusion of a good deal of trade that should be handled through express channels. It is hard for a person not conversant with the business to know what it costs an express company to handle the ordinary run of parcels, and it may be that the present scale of rates in this country is not any more than enough to cover cost of doing the work, but the opinion seems to be pretty generally held that the express people have what is vulgarly called "a fat thing," and that they could easily lop 25 or more per cent. off their rates and still make good returns on their investment. A general reduction in rates would certainly have the effect of largely increasing the volume of business handled in this way and would probably result in the end in a net gain to the company. As it is all sorts of schemes have to be resorted to to get small consignments of goods to their destinations economically. A common method is to divide the goods up into a number of small parcels so that they can be shipped by post. To compete for this business the express people have made a rate corresponding to the postal rate, which is very much lower in proportion than their regular schedule, which shows that they can if they like handle the business a good deal cheaper than they are doing at present.

COLLECTIONS.

The credit season is now practically over for this year in the west so far as retail accounts are concerned. Most country merchants annually notify their customers that after the crop is off terms are cash, and this year the rule will be more rigidly adhered to than ever. This looks at first sight like a hard proposition, but it is absolutely essential in the case of most country merchants if they are to continue in business. A farmer who cannot pay his store bill after harvest is likely to never be in a position to pay it unless in very exceptional cases, and the average general merchant cannot afford to have many such accounts on his books. With the closing of the year's credit accounts comes the difficult task of getting in the money outstanding and of doing so without unpleasantness with the customer if this can be avoided. There are always on every

merchant's books a certain number of accounts which will come in of their own accord without dunning or any sort of pressure. A certain percentage of the remaining accounts will come in as a rule after one or two askings and the others have to be rustled for. These are the ones that give the merchant anxious care and often more or less trouble. The time to deal with them is when the money is moving and if the storekeeper does not get his share before heavier obligations are paid the chances are in a year like this he will eventually get nothing at all.

Selling Goods by Lottery.

The charge against J. Johnson, merchant, Winnipeg, accused of disposing of goods by lottery, was argued yesterday at the police court. Mr. Geo. Patterson taking the case for the crown. The point on which the defence argued their case is that defendant, who runs a bankrupt stock sale, gave away with each five dollars' worth of goods certain coupons which entitled the receiver to free articles and that there was nothing any more unlawful in this than in giving trading stamps for goods. A test of skill in shooting at a turkey with a gun had also to be made before the "free articles," among them a horse and rig, could become the property of the successful marksman. Examination was made of Mr. Johnson's assistant, who described the methods of conducting the sales of the bankrupt stock and in distributing the coupons, with certain numbers. The newspapers were utilized to advertise that a prize would be offered for the purchaser securing a certain coupon and customers of the store were told of the agreement.

Mr. Patterson claimed that the method was a gambling device to entice business and it allowed to continue would necessitate other tradesmen adopting similar methods, which would injure trade on a business basis.

Mr. E. H. Macklin, business manager of the Free Press, gave evidence in regard to the publication of the Bankrupt Stock company's advertisement in the Evening News Bulletin of Oct. 6. He produced the manuscript of the advertisement, handed into the office for publication.

Arthur Dulmage, a clerk in the Free Press business office, testified in regard to the manner of receiving advertisements. Mr. Johnston, he said, had brought advertisements into the office.

Edward Hawke, another clerk, was called. His evidence was much the same.

Lawrence Ogden, being recalled, could not remember whether it was he or Mr. Johnston took the advertisement to the Free Press office. He considered the writing of the advertisement to be much similar to Mr. Johnston's.

This concluded the evidence and the lawyers each briefly addressed the court.

Mr. Patterson in his address contended that the defendant had clearly broken the lottery law by advertising his scheme of drawing, as had been presented to the court. Mr. Patterson said that the case was brought on more as a test case.

Mr. Bonnar, counsel for the defendant, contended that the lottery law had not been broken. He claimed that as shown in the advertisement, no property was given to those holding the tickets, but a chance to shoot at turkeys, and it depended upon the skill of the shooter whether he got the prize or not. It was simply intended as an advertising scheme and not as a means to make money.

His worship said he would take the case into consideration and give his opinion a week from to-day.

The information was laid by the chief of police under the criminal code and the title of the case is the Queen vs. Johnson.

The Manitoba Milling Company is erecting a flour and feed store at Franklin. The company has also sheeted its elevator and placed new sills under it.

Mining stocks slumped badly in the Montreal market last week. War Eagle lost 35 points, selling down to 100. Republic, Virtue, Montreal and London were among the other stocks which declined.