

in individual industries, subject to competition, would be risky, hence the desire to control an entire industry. The latest proposed combination of this kind is one to control the wholesale grocery trade of Canada. A report comes from Toronto to the effect that agents are endeavoring to secure control of the wholesale grocery trade of Canada for an English syndicate. All the wholesale grocers there have been approached, and most of them have agreed to sell and give options. London, Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa and Kingston firms have also given options. If the scheme is successful, one board of directors will control the business of the country, and for the present each house will continue as it is. With a gigantic syndicate such as the one proposed, the promoters say they can make much greater profits, as money could be got for two per cent, which now costs six per cent., and by buying in large lots they would get lower prices.

This is a new departure in the combination business. Heretofore attention has been given mainly to industrial branches of trade. The control of a trade so diversified in its nature as the wholesale grocery business, is certainly a remarkable undertaking, and the outcome of the scheme will be awaited with interest. At a glance the difficulties in the way of the undertaking would seem almost insurmountable. But with unlimited capital it must be remembered great things can be accomplished. One effect of such a combination would certainly be to greatly curtail the present too promiscuous credit business, in the grocery trade at least. Time would also likely be shortened, though in the grocery trade this is not nearly so great an evil as in some other branches. It is not likely that the combination would advance prices materially, but the unbusinesslike and demoralizing custom frequently indulged in of cutting prices to ruinous figures would of course be entirely stopped. Still, in a branch like wholesale groceries, there would certainly be many new competitors springing up all over the country, whom the combination would not be safe in entirely ignoring, and in this way the situation would be made interesting for the proposed combination.

The influence upon the retail trade of a combination in the wholesale trade, would probably be beneficial. One of the worst features of extreme competition in the wholesale trade is the multiplying of retail stores, in the form of supply accounts and in other ways, and the bolstering up of unsound concerns. Credit is so easily obtained, that it has been an easy matter for almost any one to rush into business, regardless of means and qualifications. We do not require to go far from home to find many examples of this nature. The result is that altogether too many stores have been established all over the country. Trade has thus been cut up and rendered unprofitable for those who were in a position to carry on business successfully. Failures are made more frequent, and sometimes a situation of general demoralization has been reached. An entire branch of wholesale trade controlled by one board of directors, as in the case of the proposed grocery combination, would soon have the effect of changing all this. Risky or doubtful accounts would not be taken, for if the board controlled the entire

trade, there would be nothing to be gained by taking such accounts. Under such conditions, to supply doubtful parties, would simply amount to taking business from a solid retailer to assist a risky one. Under the present system of keen competition, wholesalers sometimes take very great risks in order to secure business. Under the combination system the board of management would already have the business, and risky accounts would be foolish investments, without any prospective gain from them.

If the combination system is made to work in the wholesale grocery trade, it will no doubt be tried in other branches, and we may eventually have the wholesale trade of the country altogether in the hands of a few combinations. As already stated, however, the difficulties in the way of such combinations would seem to be such as to render the plan almost impractical. At least many will not believe it possible until it is put successfully in operation.

### ABOLISH THE DUTY.

In several sections of Manitoba meetings have been held to discuss the question of duty on feed and grain. What is specially interesting about these meetings is, that it is the farmers who are asking for free feed and free seed grain. In some instances resolutions have been passed requesting the Government to remove the duty at least temporarily on these commodities. At a meeting held last month at Sourisford, South-western Manitoba, the necessity of the farmers was presented. Resolutions were adopted, asking for the removal of the duty on feed and seed grains for a few months. Other municipalities were also urged to take action to the same end, with the hope of gaining the desired result.

The drought of last spring throughout the west proved specially destructive to feed grains. While wheat stood the drought remarkably well, and in some districts produced a very fair crop in spite of the very adverse weather conditions, coarse grains were largely a failure. Few farmers have more feed grains than they require for their own use, and a great many are short of their requirements for feeding. In the spring there is certain to be a large demand for oats, and to some extent for barley, for seed. The oats grown last year are poor quality, and even where farmers have a supply, they would prefer to purchase something better for seed. There are also a good many new settlers who will be commencing for the first time next spring to cultivate the land, and they will want seed grain. It does, therefore, seem like a hardship that farmers should be compelled to pay a heavy duty on seed grain. Those who are short of coarse grain for feed are also compelled to pay higher prices on account of the duty.

The duty on oats is 10 cents per bushel and on ground feed there is a duty of 20 per cent. This duty has this season had the effect of advancing the price of these articles to an extent equal to the customs tax upon them. Notwithstanding the duty, considerable importations of oats and feed have been made from the United States. At Minneapolis, Minnesota, oats are quoted at from 19 to 22 cents per bushel, of 32 pounds, as to quality,

while here the bushel is 34 pounds. The oats imported into Manitoba have been mostly of the best quality and have sometimes cost a little higher than these quotations. With freight and duty added, these oats cost about 40 to 41c delivered at Winnipeg, in car lots, and this is about the figure which has ruled for some time past. Dealers who import the oats, sell them here in smaller quantities than car lots at 45c per bushel. With the duty removed oats could be handled here just 10 cents per bushel cheaper. In Minneapolis feed is quoted at \$10 to \$11 per ton as to quality. In the Winnipeg market good feed is worth this season from \$25 to \$26 per ton, wholesale quotations. In view of the light crop last season, and the prospective demand for imported oats for seed, as well as the present necessities of coarse grain and ground stuff for feeding purposes, the question of the removal of the duties from these commodities should be carefully considered. If the Government could decide in favor of at least a temporary suspension of the duty, it would be very acceptable to western farmers, and help to some extent to lighten the burden resulting from poor crops last year.

The duty on corn imported into this country is 7½ cents per bushel. Canada is not a corn growing country, except in a small section of western Ontario, where considerable corn is grown. The duty on this commodity could be readily dispensed with entirely, to the general advantage of all concerned. Corn is largely used as a feed grain, and forms a considerable proportion of the ground feed at present being used in Manitoba. Imports of corn into Canada during 1889 reached the large amount of about 10,600,000 bushels, a portion of which may have been exported again. This tax on corn does not benefit Canadian farmers, but rather the contrary, for as a matter of fact the farmers themselves are large consumers of the imported article, which they use for feeding stock.

### IMMIGRATION.

The announcement that the Local Government has decided to pursue a vigorous immigration policy will be received with general satisfaction by all classes of the community. Premier Greenway struck the key note when he remarked at the commercial travellers' dinner recently, that what Manitoba required was people. With the qualification that the people are the right class, the statement exactly covers the situation here. We have here everything necessary to make a great community, and what we want to complete the work is people.

In a comparative sense, Manitoba has made good progress during the last decade. The growth of population and development of the country has even been rapid, and such as to surprise those familiar only with the slow progress of the east. During the last few years railways have been extended all through the province, thriving settlements have been formed in previously uninhabited districts, towns and villages have grown up all over the country, the area under cultivation has largely increased, and there has been a rapid change going on in the land, which is wonderful to those who can look back a few years, and compare the country now with what it was when they first arrived in the Prairie Province.