

THE COMMERCIAL

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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, AUGUST 25.

PRACTICAL ROAD BUILDING.

The question of good roads and how to obtain them is attracting more and more attention each year as public opinion becomes more enlightened, and their practical utility more fully appreciated. In the west the matter is a most important one as owing to the heavy nature of the soil and the flatness of the country bad roads are exceedingly hard to manage with. This matter is receiving a good deal of attention in the Northwestern States as well as in Western Canada and owing to the similarity of physical conditions the experience of those states in road-building should be most useful in Manitoba, although so far their experience is about as limited as our own. The State of Minnesota is contemplating a rather radical move at present which might be watched with interest here. It is proposed that at the forthcoming session of the state legislature a bill shall be passed authorizing the employment of convict labor from the state penitentiary in constructing roads, bridges and drains throughout the state. The bill also proposes to utilize prisoners under sentence in the county jails for this work. The labor unions of the state have been asked to pronounce upon the scheme and have done so in its favor so that the only possible source of objection has thus been found favorable. It is believed that in no other way can the convict labor be used to better advantage in the service of the community at large. Whether the scheme will prove as satisfactory as its advocates believe remains to be seen, but it certainly possesses a number of good features. It may be found that the question of distance and safe-keeping of the prisoners is a barrier in the way of its complete success. The main point for

us is that it may develop at least a partial solution of the labor problem in connection with the construction of roads.

As a matter of fact the whole question of good roads in rural districts hinges upon that of labor. How to get the work done without too great a cost is what municipal councils want to know. Hitherto the statute labor plan has been largely in vogue. This is now, however, in most places no longer popular and the councils are obliged to hire labor. In Ontario the statute labor plan has been developed to its highest possible degree of usefulness and last year something like 11,000,000 days of labor were put in on the roads by men and teams with results which were, according to the provincial road commissioner, far from satisfactory. In fact, he seems to think that the greater part of this labor was lost mostly owing to carelessness and poor supervision.

One rural municipality in Ontario, the township of Trafalgar, furnishes a concrete example of what may be done by thorough supervision of road making. There the reeve has happily been a man who had this matter very much at heart and he has given a great deal of attention to the work, with the result that the Trafalgar township road and bridges are known all over Ontario for their excellence and durability, all of which has been done with surprisingly little expense. This result has been accomplished by having a broad and comprehensive plan and faithfully following it. If Trafalgar township can do this so can others, not only in Ontario but in Manitoba or anywhere. It may be added that statute labor is used in that township under proper direction.

Another instance of good road making and its results is that of a township in the State of Iowa, where there is a town of 500 inhabitants. The neighboring towns in the other townships are very much larger and more influential and in fine weather when the roads are good these larger towns draw most of the trade which should feed the little one but when wet weather comes the latter has things all its own way owing to the excellence of the roads leading to it, which is due to the fact that one man is responsible for all the road-making in that particular township and not a number of irresponsible and indifferent pathmasters.

These are instances showing that good roads are possible where earnest effort is made to secure them and where somebody is made responsible for the whole scheme of roads in the district. The labor question is, as has been said, the most difficult of solution, but even this can be overcome in time and even if statute labor has to be depended upon entirely it can, under proper supervision, be made to do much better service than in the past. If the experiment of Minnesota should prove satisfactory perhaps a

plan for the utilization of convict labor in this work in Manitoba may be evolved in the near future.

WINNIPEG WATERWORKS.

An unfortunate state of affairs has arisen in connection with the new Winnipeg waterworks pumping and machinery plant. It appears that the volume of water rising in the artesian well which is to be the source of supply is so large that there has been a great deal of overflow and soakage about the foundations of the buildings and of the large brick chimney, which has been erected outside of the boiler room, in consequence of which these are settling to a dangerous extent. The city engineer attributes the settlement to quicksand, which has been disturbed by the soakage. The result of this unfortunate condition is that the operation of the plant is indefinitely delayed, the city is put to much additional expense and a great deal of hard feeling has been engendered among the councillors and officials concerned. It is a pity that misfortunes of this kind cannot occur in connection with any public service without giving rise to all sorts of bad feeling, harsh and often unjust criticism and demands for the dismissal of the unlucky persons who are directly responsible. How much better it would be to meet the situation in a calm and reasonable manner, everyone in authority lending themselves rather to finding a solution of the difficulty than a weak spot in somebody else's record in connection with the job. The trouble at the Winnipeg waterworks might have arisen in any city and under the most expert supervision, so that there is nothing to be gained by wishing that further advice had been taken before the project was undertaken. In any case the immediate business of the council is to concentrate its efforts on finding a remedy for the difficulty, leaving the placing of the blame for a calmer period.

CHAMBER OF MINES AGAIN.

Further criticisms of the Central Canada Chamber of Mines whose head office is in this city, are appearing in leading English papers. A characteristic specimen of these, copied from The Canadian Gazette of August 2, appears elsewhere in this issue and a perusal of the article will show the line upon which exception has been taken to the chamber's proceedings. No reasonable person can object to the general tone of the Gazette's article nor to the modest requests which it sets forth as the quickest way to settle the matter, namely, that sworn statements from reputable mining experts shall accompany the glowing articles in which the management of the chamber describe these central Canadian mines. In the mining business perhaps more than any other, expert advice is essential before any safe basis of flotation can be reached.