

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, SEPTEMBER 17, 1883.

ELEVATOR MONOPOLY.

The system heretofore pursued by the O. P. R. management, in refusing loading privileges at all shipping points where elevators existed, unless through these elevators, and consequently by paying a loading charge to their owners, has come to be generally styled the elevator monopoly, although a look into the meaning and derivation of the word monopoly will show, that in this case it is sadly misapplied. A monopoly is a thing that can only be enjoyed by one, and as nearly a dozen different men and firms own elevators throughout the Northwest, and any person or firm willing to comply with the O. P. R. regulations can construct others, there can be no monopoly in connection therewith. Any defects in or complaints against the privileges guaranteed to elevator owners should therefore be rated as defects or causes of complaint, seeing these men have taken advantage of nothing that is not free to any other person or company.

The general public have been unwilling or slow to recognize the principle above laid down on this elevator question, but the Winnipeg Grain Exchange at their meeting on Wednesday recognized it, although a motion was passed to ask the C. P. R. to discontinue those privileges, a majority of the members of the exchange being in favor of their discontinuance.

While there are many causes for complaint against the present elevator regulations on the C. P. R. and its branches it is questionable if a total abolition of all conditions regarding the shipping of grain would be for the benefit of the country at large and our farmers in particular, and it is beyond question, that it would be anything but an adulterated boon to men engaged in the grain trade.

The policy of the C. P. R. management has from the first been, to put every obstacle in the way of the establishment of any grain storage point west of the Lake Superior shore, so that grain, once moved from the original shipping point, would be completely in their grasp, and beyond being carried to the seaboard after a winter's storage by any route but their own steamships and road. To save themselves the trouble and expense of providing local storage, they arranged

their elevator privilege system so, that owners of elevators were compelled to furnish storage accommodation far beyond the necessities for handling and shipping out the grain handled by themselves. To suit the convenience of the railway company, they were compelled to furnish at great extra expense additional and unnecessary cleaning and handling machinery, so that in case of block west of the Company's storage point, grain dealers in the Northwest would bear their burden until the block was cleared. Like all other pieces of selfish policy the elevator regulations were overdone, and to-day there is not one elevator along the C. P. R. lines for every two that would have been, had this policy been less selfish on the part of the company, and more liberal to elevator owners.

The blockade last winter, when the company were paralyzed and powerless, to relieve this country of its load of grain, showed up the defects of the elevator system, and has no doubt in a great measure prompted this action of the Grain Exchange. Still it should be asked whether a total abolition of the present elevator privileges, or a modification of them would best suit the wants of the country and the grain trade. A modification admitting of the construction and working of a class of small and cheaply constructed elevators would we think cover all the wants of grain dealers, while a complete abolition as asked for in the Exchange resolution, would admit of loading from wagons, or in any way imaginable, and such unbridled license would we believe not be for the benefit of the grain trade.

There are some people who will say never mind the grain trade, if the farmer's interests are served. But the question here comes in, would the farmer be benefitted by the change asked for by the Exchange? We have no hesitation in answering in the negative. Where such a system has been tried, it has been found that in a few years the grain markets of country towns have sunk to mere trucking points, when the country merchant trucks his goods to the farmer for his grain, and takes good care to be on the right side of the bargain. With indiscriminate shipping every village huckster can erect an overgrown dry goods box in which to store the grain he trucks for, and with the bait of giving credit before harvest can use a lever to secure his share of the grain going to market. If there is one advantage possessed here, better worth preserving

than another, it is that of an ever ready cash grain market for our farmers, such as this country now has, and to admit of indiscriminate loading and shipping of grain would be to open the widest kind of a gate to a system of truck, which would be a curse to the country.

But there comes into this proposed change the question of the rights of those who have spent their money in elevator construction under the belief, that present privileges would be maintained to them. Any infringement upon these privileges is certainly a breach of faith to them. However, as other members of the Grain Exchange have had nothing to do with, and never sanctioned these privileges, the breach of faith would be solely on the part of the railway company which granted them to suit the convenience of its management, and the C.P.R. management have all along shown their determination as well as their ability to make contracts entered into binding enough upon the opposite party, but accommodatingly lax so far as conditions are binding upon themselves. It is not likely therefore, that elevator owners would receive any indemnity from loss through the request of the Grain Exchange being granted. Like many others they would have to suffer for the convenience of the C.P.R. company.

GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES.

In commercial circles the man who receives a guarantee or indorsement from another, if he, the recipient is possessed of a grain of honor, or for that matter follows a sound business policy, he will strain every effort to save that guaranteeing party or indorser from any loss by his obliging action. And not unfrequently when a business man reaches insolvency, if he has any secured creditors, they are endorsers who have pledged their credit to aid him in his unsuccessful career. Such is the general rule in straight trade circles, and pretty hard things are often said about the insolvent who allows his endorsing friend to meet with loss.

The great trouble with politics in this Canada of ours is that they are not run upon business principles, and if there is one point in which the difference between business and politics stands out more marked than in others it is in the matter of guarantees. It is seldom that an individual or corporation borrows or bears any trouble in connection with a guarantee obtained from a Government either Federal or local, unless it be trouble as to