

THE COMMERCIAL

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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, MAY 5, 1900.

BETTER ROADS.

As a result of the movement in Winnipeg and the adjoining municipalities for better roads, it has been decided to press the question upon the attention of the provincial government. One thing which will be asked for is the appointment of a provincial road inspector. To this no objection can be taken from any quarter, and it is to be hoped the government will concede at once to this request. The appointment of a provincial inspector or instructor in road making, whose services and advice would be available in all districts in the province, should be a material assistance to the cause of better roads. The government will also be asked to pass a wide tire act. It is hardly necessary to say anything on this point. Wherever the question of good roads has made any headway, the necessity of enforcing the use of wide tires has been recognized.

The proposal that the government be asked to contribute 50 per cent of the cost of constructing and maintaining roads leading into the city, may bring objections from other districts. Naturally, residents of other municipalities will consider themselves equally entitled to assistance in road building which cannot be controverted.

If Manitoba is to make the progress desired in the direction of securing better roads, it would seem that some central influence is necessary to take the matter in hand. Roads, it has been said, are the arteries of commerce, along which flows the life stream of the nation. Good roads bring prosperity and contentment. They exert a great civilizing influence. Our municipal system is not adapted to the securing of good roads to the extent at least that is required. A

well defined and comprehensive plan should be undertaken and systematically carried out under control of a central authority. Under the municipal system we could at best hope only for patches of good road. The main roads, at least, throughout the country, should be constructed by the government. In nearly all European countries, and in some of the states of the American union, state aid for country roads is recognized. In England, Ireland and Scotland county engineers are appointed to supervise work on the roads. State aid is also given. The county system for road management is much superior to the parish or municipal system. In Germany, France, and nearly all other advanced European countries, the main roads are under national control.

TERRITORIAL LEGISLATION.

The Winnipeg board of trade will take vigorous steps to oppose the measure introduced in the Territorial legislature relating to assignments. The object of the Territorial act is to have insolvent estates wound up by a resident of the district. In the first place this would mean that in nine cases out of ten estates would be placed in the hands of an incompetent or inexperienced person, whereas under the present procedure such estates are almost invariably placed in charge of experts. The cost of winding up estates under the proposed new territorial law would undoubtedly be greatly increased, and besides this there would certainly be much greater delay in closing up the estate than under the present mode of procedure. Insolvents are naturally interested in having their estates pay as large a portion of their liabilities as possible and therefore the proposed change is not in the interest of insolvents. So far as the creditors are concerned, the proposed act, if carried to the extreme, would deprive them of the right of disposing of their own property to the best advantage. Statistics compiled here show that only about five per cent of the liabilities of insolvent estates within the Territories has been owing to local creditors. Even this small proportion has been made up mostly of preferred claims, such as rents, etc., which must be paid in full, before other creditors receive anything, regardless also of the expense of winding up the estate. This shows that the proposed Territorial act is entirely unreasonable and unwarranted. Merchants in the Territories will naturally be opposed to the measure, as it will have the effect, if enforced, of curtailing their credit with Winnipeg and Eastern jobbers. If the measure is passed in the objectionable form as introduced, steps should be taken to have it disallowed by the federal government, as it would seem to be an

unreasonable interference with trade freedom within the Dominion. The Winnipeg board of trade has communicated with the Territorial government, and will send a delegation to Regina to oppose the measure, if the bill is not modified satisfactorily.

STATUTE LABOR.

A century has gone by since the adoption of statute labor in Ontario for "improving" country roads. It was an act of the first parliament of Upper Canada, convened by Lord Simcoe, the first Lieutenant-Governor, at Newark, now Niagara-on-the-Lake. This was in 1796. Less than ten years later England and Scotland repealed their statute labor law, because of the excessively bad condition of the roads, substituting a system of better management and expenditure which under the methods of Macadam, Telford and McNeil have amply justified the change.

Manitoba has adopted the statute labor system of Ontario, which is here shown to be just about a century behind the times. In this respect the "progressing West" has not shown a very progressive spirit. When we get the statute labor system abolished we will be in a better position to adopt some modern plan that will prove more effective in securing better roads.

SMALL-POX.

The intemperate language of a Winnipeg city official, in connection with the small-pox scare here, has done great injury to the business interests of the city. This official seems to have lost his head, or his senses for a time, and used language which would make it appear that the situation is ten times more serious than it really is. The facts of the case, briefly, are: A sick passenger was a short time ago taken from a tram here to the public hospital. The disease turned out to be small pox, but was not properly diagnosed, in consequence of which a number of persons were exposed to infection. In due time a number of the exposed persons, principally nurses and attendants at the hospital, developed the disease. No deaths, however, among these, have occurred, and nearly all are mild cases, only two or three being regarded as serious. All patients and suspects have been carefully quarantined. The statement that the disease is of a most virulent type, and that there is danger of an epidemic, seem entirely without foundation in fact.

The town of St. Catharines, Ont., took a vote of ratepayers on the question of giving a loan of \$40,000 to a beet sugar factory which it is proposed to start there, with the result that the proposition was emphatically rejected.