

**THE COMMERCIAL**

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

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**A STRONG CASE.**

The Winnipeg board of trade has put in a very strong plea for the appointment of a "thoroughly competent representative of the western grain shippers" as a member of the proposed railway commission. The board has made out a very strong case in favor of such an appointment. It is so strong that it may be taken as a foregone conclusion that the government will see the wisdom of acquiescing in the request. The arguments advanced by the board for the appointment of a representative of the grain shippers are most onerous on the railway commission, were prepared by the government itself. The board has simply taken up the official arguments in favor of the appointment of the commission, and applied them to the case in point.

The greatest transportation problem in Canada to-day—in fact in America—is the carrying of the grain product of Western Canada to market. The government recognized and referred to this fact in introducing the question of the appointment of a railway commission. The announcement regarding the commission in the speech at the opening of parliament

indicated the great influx of population into our Northwest Territories and the very large additional areas of fertile land which are being brought under cultivation combine to further press upon us the need for increased transportation facilities for the forwarding of our grain and other products to the markets of the world."

In view of this situation it was announced that a commission of experienced men would be appointed. The case is therefore so strong that the appointment of at least one representative of the western grain shipping interest on the commission can hardly be avoided.

**FOR GOOD ROADS.**

The annual spring break-up again brings forward the question of improving the public roads. We are frequently told that transportation is the great problem of the day. People who talk about transportation frequently forget the transportation problem—the country road. The most important feature of the transportation problem is the condition of the farm from the farm to market is a very important part of the question. Some part of the attention given to railways might with advantage be directed to the question of country roads. It is just possible

that the assistance given by the province of Manitoba in various ways to railways, might have been expended to better advantage in improving the public highways.

The transportation question begins with the public roads. Good roads are the cause of an enormous loss to the people. The improvement of the roads is apparently a question which the rural municipalities are not capable of grappling with as it should be taken hold of. Municipal management in the rural districts is not equal to the occasion. There is neither the necessary business qualification nor the practical knowledge available in the municipal management to handle this question properly. Such utter lack of work as is done on the roads in some of the municipalities, almost seems like a waste of time, especially such work as is done under the antiquated statute law system.

The question of finances is also beyond the power of many rural municipalities, at least to the extent of undertaking any comprehensive system of building good roads. The people are either unable or unwilling to

grapple with the question, and so it goes on from year to year without any serious effort to improve the roads. Most of the municipalities could do something, if they had the right kind of men to take hold of municipal affairs; but this they have not got. It is not to be expected that men possessing the business qualification and practical knowledge necessary to properly handle this question would be found in the rural districts. If only a mile of good road could be built each year in each municipality, we would have good roads in time. Instead of this we cannot think at the moment of a single mile of properly constructed road that has been built by any rural municipality in Manitoba in the last twenty years. That these municipalities came into existence. The oldest rural municipalities in the province, surrounding the city of Winnipeg, have not a foot of even passably good road. We say even to the end of the city pavement in and direction, in bad weather, there is a drop down in the mud and a slight ahead which is simply sickening. All these years the residents of the rural districts have gone on wallowing through the mud, wasting time and wearing out horses and vehicles, with apparently never a thought about attempting to construct decent roads.

**GRANTS TO RAILWAYS.**

Some interesting statistics relating to bonuses to railways were presented in parliament at Ottawa the other day. The sums paid as subsidies to railways by the federal government, divided among the different provinces, were as follows: Prince Edward Island, nil; Nova Scotia, \$1,872,000; New Brunswick, \$1,392,000; Quebec, \$0,091,000; Ontario, \$19,750,000; Manitoba, \$3,255,000; British Columbia, \$9,982,000; and Northwest Territories, \$7,547,000. The amount paid in subsidies in the three maritime provinces is less than in the

**IRRIGATION LAWS A FAILURE.**

A western journal was unfortunate enough to attempt to elicit a reply recently to an article in "The Commercial" opposing the granting of lands to irrigation corporations. The arguments against granting lands to irrigation corporations are so strong from the standpoint either of theory or experience, that it is a surprise that even the western journal could have been found to champion the cause of irrigation corporations. That journal contended that the law now in force in the Territories provided ample protection for the settler upon irrigated land, and that under the law there would be no opportunity for the corporations to treat the settlers harshly.

In the arid districts of the western states the people have been making laws for years relating to irrigation corporations. They have been continually amending or substituting laws for law, but have been unable to reach desirable conditions. They have now come to the very wise conclusion that the whole system of irrigation by corporations is wrong, and that it cannot be made right by laws which tend to perpetuate that system. It is now recognized in the United States that irrigation is properly a national work and that it should be controlled by the government. Law has proved ineffective to relieve the settlers upon irrigated lands. The following reference to irrigation laws, clipped from a United States exchange, is a case in point:

"A law has just gone into effect in California providing for the dissolution of irrigation districts which were formed under the Wright Irrigation Act. When this act was first passed the people of many sections thought the law was to be a perfect panacea for their irrigation ills, but it proved otherwise. The operation of the Wright act proved a great blight to the many fair sections of that resourceful state, and the people of the districts will no doubt now make strong efforts to get out from under the question. The experience of California ought to be a lesson to other arid states to make haste slowly in the enactment of new irrigation laws."

It is not to be expected that the law will prove any more effective in Canada than it has done in the United States. Irrigation work is yet in its infancy here, and it is important that we should start right. What we should have is a national system of irrigation for our semi-arid district. There is a large area of fine land in the west which only requires an assured water supply to make it one of the finest districts of our Canada. Not another acre of this or any other land should be allowed to pass into the hands of corporations. Every acre should be held for the actual settler, and the irrigation work should be done on a comprehensive scale by the government, and not in patch-work by corporations, who will have it in their power to oppress the settlers who depend upon them for water.

A phenomenal find of gold is reported to have been made on Bear Creek, six miles from Dawson. The vein is from fourteen to twenty feet deep and over one hundred feet wide. The smallest pan has been twenty-five cents, and the average fifty cents. The pans on one streak ran \$5. R. Cowan of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and two others, own the property. Four men, with a horse, are taking out over \$400 daily. The claim is surrounded by the Treadgold concession. It is believed there is a large area there, and very rich.



MANITOBA FARM HOMES—G. R. CAMPION, PIPESTONE.

other provinces. The intercolonial railway, however, cost about \$70,000,000, a large proportion of the expenditure for this government road having been in the maritime provinces. The Prince Edward Island Railway—a government road—cost over \$5,000,000. Naturally the government would not bonus roads to compete with the government system.

What is particularly interesting in regard to these statistics, is the proportion of money voted by the government for road—cost over \$5,000,000, with the expenditure in the older provinces. The total sum paid as subsidies to aid railway construction between Lake Superior and the Rockies was \$12,446,000. Some eastern journals will keep up the cry about the great expenditure the east has assumed in order to develop the west. The actual figures, however, tell a different story. The vast area of 56,087,072 acres of land has been granted to rail ways in Manitoba and the territories, of which about 30,000,000 acres have been selected or earned. The value of these lands is greater than the cost of all the railways built in Manitoba and the Territories. Thus, it will be seen, the West has more than paid for its own railways, while the actual cash outlay has been for railways mainly in the older provinces.