

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, NOVEMBER 10, 1885.

## LIBERAL FREIGHT RATES

Ever since the completion of the monopoly compact between the C.P.R. and the St. P. M. & M. Railway Companies, shippers here and in the east have been on tiptoe waiting to see what kind of through rates to the east around the north shore of Lake Superior we were going to have during the coming winter. The visit of the General Manager of the C.P.R. to this country was looked forward to as the time and occasion on which this great conundrum would be unravelled, and those in expectation have not been disappointed. The General Manager has come, and he has proclaimed with high sounding words of alleged liberality the through freight rates on wheat from here to the Atlantic seaboard. We cannot do better than give the announcement as it appeared on Tuesday last in the *Free Press*:

"Mr. Van Horne, fully recognizing the requirements of the country, has decided to fix the grain rates for this winter at the very low rate of fifty cents per 100 lbs. on sound wheat and for Nos. 2 and 3 frosted 8 cents less from Winnipeg to Montreal and all points east, with a slight increase from other stations. The extent of this reduction will be appreciated when it is pointed out that the regular rate on sound wheat from Winnipeg is 62 cents; Brandon, 63 cents; Regina, 70 cents. This shows a reduction from Winnipeg of 12 cents on sound wheat and 18 cents on frosted wheat; from Brandon, 11 cents on sound wheat, 19 cents on frosted wheat; from Regina, 16 cents on sound wheat, 24 cents on frosted wheat. This heavy reduction ranges from 20 to 35 per cent. off fair carrying rates."

There is a terrible lot of news in this short paragraph, and the first item in importance of that kind is the statement that the regular rate from Winnipeg to Montreal is 62c a 100 pounds. The 63c rate from Brandon and 70c rate from Regina are also fresh items of news to the outside world, although all three may seem stale to Mr. Van Horne. That gentleman's alleged liberal reduction to 50c from Winnipeg is also news, but after discovering the full rate the reader is not astonished at this reduction, and by no means amazed at its liberality. In fact the greatest cause for amazement is the astounding coolness and unwarranted

assurance of Mr. Van Horne in laying claim to liberality, or anything that could be twisted contorted or perverted into a semblance of it. To any one acquainted with the rates at which grain has been carried to Montreal for during the last two years, Mr. Van Horne's full rates must appear the very essence of extortion, and his reduced ones a compromise between extortion and unreasonably high figures.

Let us for a minute look into this wonderful so called reduction in rates. Nearly three years ago when the C.P.R. had no Port Arthur route to compete with United States lines, the latter carried wheat from this province to the Atlantic for 56 to 62c a 100 lbs. The rate now by rail and lake over the C.P.R. is only 43c per 100 lbs, so that the liberality now being extended to the Northwest grain raiser and shipper is only 7c a 100 higher than it has been on sound wheat, on lower qualities of frozen 1c lower than the present through rate on sound grain. Somehow or other the grain shipper utterly fails to see where the liberality comes in, and we fear the poor farmer with a partially damaged crop of wheat on hand will be equally blind to the benefits conferred upon him. But of course both are only ordinary mortals with skulls far too thick to perceive the magnanimity of the brilliant and versatile General Manager of the C.P.R. We regret that we are also compelled to admit being afflicted with the same stupidity and blindness.

We believe the whole cause for Mr. Van Horne's wonderful liberality (?) can be found in the fact that he has no longer any opposition to fear. The chains of monopoly are now firmly fastened around this country, and while the General Manager of the C.P.R. holds one shackle in his hand he knows that the other connecting one will be firmly clutched by his hirelings of the St. P. M. & M. Last winter the latter road offered to receive wheat from a point in Manitoba Southwest of Winnipeg, to be carried by all rail to Montreal for 40c a hundred. This year wheat will have to go from the same place over the C.P.R. at over 50c. All this must be borne by the struggling farmers of the Northwest, for the grain buyer, like any other business man, will buy so as to have a margin after paying the liberal (?) change in freight rates. We really feel vexed that we cannot see

the liberality and philanthropy of Mr. Van Horne's new rates, and with all those who have to suffer under them, we ask that gentleman to pardon us for our blindness and incredulity.

## WINNIPEG FIRE INSURANCE.

It seems that at last there is a determined effort being made in this city to secure a reduction of the extortionate fire insurance premiums which have been paid by the people here during the past few years, and every fair minded man as well as those interested in the city's progress cannot wish other than success to the effort. Now that the City Council and the Board of Trade have joined hands in this very necessary work, we have every reason to hope that the interests of insurers will at last receive some consideration from companies doing business here, and from that collection of local agents known as the Board of Underwriters, who have managed to extort pretty comfortable livings out of a business public, who for the past three years were by no means too able to stand the pressure so persistently applied to them.

The meeting of the committees of the City Council and Board of Trade with the Underwriters on Tuesday made plain the fact that from either the underwriters or the companies no concession would be secured unless what could be forced from them. Every argument used in favor of reduced rates was met, not as might be expected with clear reasoning from an opposite point, but with some subterfuge, such as would never be expected from men claiming to understand business affairs. Not the slightest attempt was made to account for insurance premiums having risen from twenty to in some instances two hundred per cent. during the past five years, while during that time the city spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in procuring the best possible means of fire extinction and prevention. When five years ago the city of Winnipeg possessed only a volunteer fire brigade, (very good in its own way no doubt, but certainly inferior to an employed one), and when in wet weather the city's streets were little better than mud gutters, insurance premiums were in every instance much lower, and in some not one half as high as they now are, although we have now a fire brigade and equipments such as no city in Canada of the same population possesses. We have also a perfect sys