

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JULY 20, 1896.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WEST.

The Commercial has once or twice lately mentioned incidentally the unpopularity of the Liberal party in the West. Previous to the recent general election, the West has returned practically a solid government support. The Liberal party in Manitoba never succeeded in electing more than one member representing that party, while in British Columbia and the Territories the solid conservative support remained unbroken. Even when the anti-railway monopoly agitation was at its height and there was much dissatisfaction with the government, the Liberals were unable to make any headway in the West.

The reason for this situation has been mainly two fold. First it has been urged that as the West was a new region, requiring expenditures of government money to aid in its development, it would be wise to support the party in power. The second and principle reason for the solid support which the West has always given the Conservative party has been the belief so prevalent here that the Liberals, as a party, did not appreciate the value of the West and were opposed to incurring expenditures for the development of the country.

As for the first reason given, that it was necessary to support the party in power in order to secure votes of money for public works, the history of the West during recent years does not show the correctness of this theory. It is true that the Conservative party carried through the Canadian Pacific Railway bill, but having done this they seemed to think they were entitled to rest upon their laurels; and although the West has for the past fifteen or sixteen years stood solidly by the governing party, the policy of the government so far as the development of the West is concerned, has been exceedingly unsatisfactory. Not a single important public work has been undertaken in the West, such for instance as the improvement of our waterways, and the aid to railways has principally been in the direction of grants of public lands, which lands, The Commercial has heretofore contended, should be held for settlement, and not be dissipated in this way.

As for the second contention, that the Liberals were not alive to the value of the West and were opposed to incurring expenditure for the development of the West, it is not worth while endeavoring at the present time to argue either for or against this belief. The Liberals no doubt made mistakes in regard to the West when they were in power, but it is so long since they have had an opportunity of showing what they would do, as a governing body, that their past record may be regarded as a matter of ancient history. At any rate, the governing party has nothing to boast of as regards its policy toward the West during recent years, and it is doubtful if the Liberals would have made any less satisfactory record, if they had been

in power. To a great extent the idea that the Liberals were opposed to Western interests has no doubt been vastly overdone here. It has been reported so frequently that it has come to be accepted by many as a matter of course. The Commercial believes that there are many leading men among the Liberals who fully appreciate the value of the West, and who are fully alive to the desirability of seeking to open out and develop the country.

Though the Conservative governments of late years have been rather inactive in their policy regarding the West, the new Tupper government made very extensive promises, during the recent political campaign, as to what would be done in the interests of the West. Some of the enterprises which were promised were the following: The construction of the proposed St. Andrew's locks on the Red river; the building of the Hudson Bay Railway; the completion of the Manitoba and Northwestern Railway; a railway through the Crow's Nest Pass; the establishment of government creameries throughout the Territories, etc. This is a pretty extensive bill of fare, but as they came as election promises, they are perhaps not entitled to as much weight as if they had been made at any other time. No doubt had the Tupper government been maintained in power, an effort would have been made to have carried out at least some of the promises. As it is, they have now gone by the board.

The new Liberal government will not be committed to anything definite regarding public enterprise in the West, as no promises were made by the party during the elections. Neither do we expect the Liberal government to at once enter upon a policy of extensive expenditure in order to develop the West. The party is on the other hand pledged to a policy of retrenchment and economy. At the same time The Commercial would take the liberty of pointing out that there are many enterprises in the West which seriously demand the attention of the new government. Furthermore, the West is justly entitled to more liberal treatment from the government of Canada, in the way of development work, than it has received for some years past. All the enterprises promised by the Tupper government are worthy ones, with possibly the exception of the government creameries. (The Commercial does not endorse the principle of government competition in the dairy trade.) It would perhaps be too much to expect the new government to take up all these matters at once, but they are all worthy of serious consideration. The vast waterways of the West are capable of great development by a very moderate expenditure. It is not too much to say that our Western waterways have been grossly neglected by the federal government, and their value as a means of aiding in the development of the country has been grossly overlooked.

The Liberals now have their opportunity. By the future and not by the past should they be judged. If their has been a prejudice against them in the West in the past, perhaps an unreasonable prejudice, they now have an opportunity of proving it so. While we do not look for a policy of extravagant expenditure, we do expect that the new government will at once enter upon an active and

energetic policy to secure the settlement and development of the West, believing that such a policy will prove to the advantage not only of the West alone, but of the nation at large.

THE COMING CONTEST.

The result of the Democratic national convention at Chicago shows that the coming contest (or rather we may say the contest now entered upon) in the United States will be a straight fight on the money question. The Republican platform prepared by the recent convention at St. Louis, declares straight for gold. The Democratic platform, now announced, is a straight declaration in favor of the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1.

As was expected from previous forecasts, the silver men carried the Democratic convention by a large majority, the platform as reported by the committee having been adopted by a vote of 626, to 303 against. The question is now, what will the sound money Democrats, who formed about one-third of the convention do? It has already been announced that another Democratic convention will be held, by the sound money section of the party, to promulgate a platform and nominate a candidate for the presidency, but it remains to be seen what will be the outcome of such a movement.

At any rate, the situation shows that the great Democratic party of the United States is in a state of demoralization, and we may say, utter hopelessness on the eve of a presidential election. The Republicans were comparatively solid for their platform, only a small minority of silver men having opposed the adoption of the platform. The Republican silver men will no doubt go over in a body to the silver section of the Democratic party, now that the latter have triumphed, and nominated their candidate for the presidency. It is also expected that the Populist party will support the Democratic silver party, thus combining the silver men of both parties and the Populists, under Bryan, the presidential nominee of the Chicago Democratic convention. Whether the sound money Democrats will unite with the Republicans, or put up a fight of their own with a third candidate in the field, remains to be seen. It was at first supposed that this would be the plan followed but the movement to hold another convention, with the avowed purpose of nominating a sound money Democratic candidate, complicates the situation somewhat.

No matter which course may be adopted, the Democratic party at the present time seems to be in desperate straits. A great many of the most influential journalists of the party utterly repudiate the platform promulgated at the recent Chicago convention, and the best men of the party, including President Cleveland and presumably his executive, are thoroughly opposed to free silver coinage. The majority of the rank and file of the party, however, has been carried away by the free silver craze, and this section seems determined upon carrying out their programme regardless of consequences. There seems to have been little attempt to compromise the situation, at the Chicago convention. The silver men were