

way Commission has in some way, known only to its members, arrived at the decision that the discrimination is "not undue or unjust." In other words the Board of Railway Commissioners has deliberately laid it down as a principle that the people of Western Canada are entitled to pay higher freight rates than the people of Eastern Canada, and they have made no attempt to equalize freight rates east and west. This astounding decision has been arrived at in the face of the fact that it was clearly established in the evidence placed before the Commission that:

1. The cost of operation in the Prairie Provinces is less than in Eastern Canada.
2. The density of traffic in Western Canada is greater than in Eastern Canada.
3. The profit to the railway companies on their western lines is greater than on their eastern lines.

Yet by some process of reasoning which western people will not be able to appreciate the Board of Railway Commissioners has calmly declared that the western Canadian is entitled to pay more for the same service than an eastern Canadian. We mistake the temper of the western people if they will accept quietly this unfair discrimination in freight rates, even tho it is approved by such an important body as the Railway Commission. Whilst grateful for the reductions provided for, it is against all reason to expect human beings to submit tamely to such decidedly unfair and unjust treatment. If an independent and non-partisan tribunal, such as the Railway Commission, deliberately finds that one portion of the population of Canada is not entitled to as good treatment in transportation as another portion then the impartiality of that tribunal is bound to be questioned, and it cannot hope to retain the respect of that portion of the Canadian people against whom it has unjustly discriminated. In attempting to justify the discrimination against the West the Railway Commission states that this discrimination is justified under the Railway Act and also under previous decisions by its own body. This sort of argument may appeal to the minds of the Railway Commissioners but will hardly appeal to the western people. As we understand it, the Railway Commission had full power to remove this discrimination and to alter any previous decisions by its own body. If we are correct the Railway Commission must bear the full burden of the responsibility of permitting the discrimination to continue.

The Commission points out that water competition in the East tends to reduce freight rates, and this is one reason for higher freight rates being justified in the West. So far as we are aware, however, no evidence was placed before the commission to show that eastern freight rates are unreasonably low, or in fact that they are so low as not to afford reasonable profits to the railway companies. That being the case, it becomes even more difficult to understand why the western people are not entitled to equally low rates. All that the western people ask for is a square deal, and no special privileges. They have been carrying an enormous and unjust burden of high freight rates ever since the West was first opened up, and it is only fair and right that the burden should be completely removed.

The Commissioners have done a good service in pointing out the needless duplication of railway lines in the West, and it is to be hoped that the Government in granting charters in the future will make an effort to see that there is no paralleling of lines and no charters granted for roads that are not needed.

It has gradually been growing more apparent since the Railway Commission was established ten years ago that freight rates in the West would not be equitably adjusted until the matter was made a political issue

and fought out in the political field. Both political parties have evaded the question in the past by referring it to the Railway Commission, which they declared was a body appointed for just such work and quite capable of performing its function to the satisfaction of the Canadian people. The present case is the first big one that the Railway Commission has dealt with and in view of its findings it becomes more apparent than ever that the western people will have to carry their fight for a square deal, even on the freight rate question, into the political field. The Commission has made no attempt to lay down any scientific principle upon which freight rates should be charged, so that the general public are still as deeply in ignorance on this question as in the past. The freight rate question will never be settled until it is settled upon the basis of equality, and fundamental principles are laid down upon which freight rates may be charged.

Undoubtedly the most satisfactory method of handling our transportation problem is thru government ownership and operation, which has proven so effective and so successful in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and practically in every important country in the world except Great Britain, United States and Canada. The tendency of the times in the United States and also in Great Britain is decidedly towards public ownership and operation and anyone who knows Canadian conditions will realize that the only effective method by which our railways will be operated for the benefit of the people is under public ownership and operation.

NO FREE WHEAT

In preparing the budget the government allowed the millers and railways to dictate their policy on the "free wheat" question. The interests and welfare of a million people in the Prairie Provinces was outweighed in the scale by the interests of a handful of wealthy millers and railway magnates. The prosperity of the rural West is a secondary consideration to that of the Special Interests who are able to present their arguments not only publicly but also privately and in ways in which the grain growers are not schooled. In discussing the question in his budget speech Finance Minister White, in part, said:

"On the one hand, it is contended that the price of wheat at the great milling centre of Minneapolis is frequently, or rather usually, higher by several cents per bushel than it is at Winnipeg, and that the western wheat grower would, in the event of wheat having free entry into the United States, get the advantage of the higher price. Particularly, it is pointed out the 'spread' in price prevails at certain seasons of the year when the farmer needs to sell his grain, and that it is most marked in the case of wheat of poorer quality for which the demand for export to Great Britain is comparatively limited. It is also put forward that with 'free wheat' the western agriculturists would be benefited by the development of further competitive shipping facilities.

"As against these contentions, it is represented the higher price at certain seasons at Minneapolis is due to local demand on the part of millers for hard wheat to mix with the softer varieties for the manufacture of flour; that such demand is limited, and consequently in the event of free entry of our wheat to the American market, the tide of our hard wheat descending upon Minneapolis would at once equalize prices on both sides of the line. It is further argued that as both Canada and the United States are wheat producing countries, the export price at Liverpool governs and will continue to govern, subject to freights and other charges, the price of wheat in Canada and the United States. The opinion has also been expressed that free entry of wheat to the United States would be a detriment, rather than an advantage to the grain grower of Western Canada, on the ground by reason of mixing in the United States it would lose its identity and consequently its higher value in the world market at Liverpool.

"Representatives of the milling interest of Canada have protested strongly against the abolition of the present duty of 60 cents per barrel upon flour. They point out that the materials entering into the construction of their

building, their plant and machinery are all subject to duty and that, with the abolition of duties upon flour, they would be in a worse position than under a system of national free trade. They contend that by reason of the geographical situation of the United States wheat fields, and the climatic conditions which give the American miller the benefit of both early and late wheat, he enjoys an advantage over them which would speedily give control of Canadian markets to the milling interest of the United States. They claim also that putting flour on the free list would have the effect of limiting or preventing the extension of the milling industry into the northwest."

Mr. White, in conclusion, expressed apprehension as to the danger to the Canadian railways if the grain trade were deflected to the south.

Mr. White, in the beginning of the above remarks, has crystallized the chief arguments of the Grain Growers in favor of accepting the offer of the United States for free trade in wheat and flour. It would undoubtedly give a great advantage to the western grain grower and would help in a very great measure to solve the "cost of living" problem in many thousands of western farm homes where the margin between success and failure is very narrow. The opening of the American market would give the Western Canadian grain grower a decidedly better price for his wheat, and surely he is entitled to the best price possible. He has faced enough hardships and been imposed upon to a sufficient extent that a patriotic government would naturally be expected to aid him in every possible way. As to the idea that the opening of the American market will injure Canadian farmers, the farmers themselves ought to know as much about this as anyone. The same argument was put up against free cattle, but the result has proven to be of great benefit to Canadian stockmen. The Canadian millers, of course, would face more active competition in the purchase of their grain and would have to pay higher prices. But practically every big milling concern in Canada is paying large profits on watered stock, and is controlled to a great extent by the railway magnates. It is ridiculous to suppose that Canadian mills situated in or alongside the wheatfields would be injured in the slightest degree by the competition from mills 400 or 500 miles to the south, which would have such a freight charge to overcome. As to the duty on machinery for Canadian mills, the millers would there have a grievance which should be removed, but it should not be forgotten that all the farmers' machinery is also taxed, and they also should be relieved in the same way. Considered all around the government has no doubt decided that more votes will be gained by the support which the millers and railways will be able to give them, than will be lost thru denying a square deal to the western farmers. It is up to the western farmers to make their votes more effective if they expect to get "free wheat."

It seems quite apparent that the decision of the government not to grant the request of the steel gang for bounties in addition to the tariff has been due in some measure, at least, to the firm stand taken by the organized farmers. A few weeks ago a delegation comprising representatives from the Grain Growers' Associations, the Dominion Grange of Ontario, and the Sarnia Fence Co. waited on the Ottawa cabinet and protested strongly against renewal of the bounties. Numerous letters of protest were also forwarded to the government and they undoubtedly deemed it wise not to ignore such well defined public opinion.

The new tariff provides that when soft coal is imported for the purpose of making coke there shall be no duty upon it. But when the same coal is imported for the purpose of keeping human beings from freezing to death it shall be taxed 53 cents per ton.

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