

*Grain Growers Guide Winnipeg June 17/25*

#### **A Blow at the Prairies**

The Crow's Nest Pass agreement is to be wiped out; that is the decision reached by the King government. The rates of the agreement on grain and flour are to be retained but for the rest the West has been delivered into the hands of the Board of Railway Commissioners. The fair promises made by Premier King are redeemed by an indorsement of the policy of the Board of Railway Commissioners which the Supreme Court of Canada declared to be illegal. The decision of the Supreme Court is to be overcome by statute which will embody the demands of the railways and give effect to the policy of the Railway Commission.

Thus there goes into the discard the only guarantee of equitable treatment in the matter of transportation rates the West possessed. Presumably the first thing to follow the passing of the legislation at Ottawa will be the removal of the discrimination in west-bound rates due to the ruling of the Supreme Court with regard to the application of the rates in the agreement. This means the raising of rates by 50 to 100 per cent., and that means an increase in the cost of production to the western farmers who are just struggling out of the slough of despair into which they were cast by the disastrous slump in prices beginning in 1920.

The abolition of the Crow's Nest Pass agreement would not be such a blow to the West if the government took the precaution to maintain statutory maximum rates on the basis of the agreement so as to ensure for the West an equality with the East, where water transportation is a competitive factor. So far no such assurance is given, and if the Board of Railway Commissioners adheres to its recent policy the value of the service will fix the rates for the West, in other words, "all the traffic will bear."

The West now faces a fight to secure something like just treatment, relatively to the East, in the matter of freight rates. The agreement, bought and paid for by the Canadian people for the express purpose of stimulating and assisting the development of the West, is to be torn up, and the equalization of freight rates about which Premier King had so much to say, is to be dependent on the discretion and policy of the Railway Commission. This body has already declared that rates must be such as will enable the Canadian Pacific Railway to pay its usual dividends and accumulate reserves, and this policy was actually put into effect on the National Transcontinental in the sanctioning of rates admittedly above what the service required, but which were required by competing service.

At a conference held in Regina last week between representatives of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments and other public bodies, it was decided to press for maximum statutory rates on grain and flour; statutory provisions for maximum rates in those parts of Canada which did not benefit by the competition of water transportation; the equalization of rates on grain and flour in any direction from points in the prairie provinces, with the Crow's Nest Pass agreement rates; a reconstitution of the Board of Railway Commissioners so as to secure better representation on that body of the various parts of the Dominion. These should be the minimum demands of the West, and they should be urged with vigor and determination upon the government at Ottawa.

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