

I. C. R. FREIGHT RATES

Manager Harris Before the Board of Trade.

A Number of Concessions Made—The West Rules the Roost.

Merchants Advised to Take a "Broad View"

—Cases of Discrimination—Four Rates on Lime.

The interest which St. John merchants take in the new I. C. R. freight tariff was very well illustrated Thursday. On ordinary occasions it is not always easy to secure more than a quorum of the board at short notice, but when the word went around yesterday morning that Manager Harris would like to meet the members there was no need of a special messenger. The secretary had some difficulty to get chairs enough to seat the crowd, representing every branch of the wholesale trade.

And in many respects Mr. Harris came down handsomely. The tariff is not nearly so bad as it was. Still, it will be seen that Mr. Harris was not unmindful of the interests of Montreal.

D. J. McLaughlin, president of the board, called the meeting to order. Mr. Harris, who was accompanied by Divisional Freight Agent Robertson, expressed the pleasure it gave him to again meet the citizens, and said he expected to come to the provinces every month or so and spend a couple of weeks knocking about, so as to meet all the patrons of the road. Taking up the new tariff, he explained that when he took charge he found no regular system existed, but that many different rates were charged on the same lines of goods. He had endeavored to frame a tariff on some basis that would be fair to all and to develop trade to Upper Canada and United States points. To do this it had been found necessary to lower the rate on what are known as goods of the first and second class, and slightly increase those on the third, fourth and fifth class, and while others had been lowered, and the merchants would have to come up to meet him in the case of 3, 4 and 5. The present basis was necessary in dealing with western lines.

Mr. Harris directed attention to the fact that St. John's chief competitor was Montreal, and while other rates had been raised, those of Montreal had not. We were, therefore, handicapped. For instance, the rate on less than railroad lots to Campbellton was 27c. from St. John, and 25c. from Montreal.

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W. S. Fisher said the commodity tariff on an article which is manufactured placed that article in class 3, while the same comes from Montreal to all provincial points as goods of class 4. This was a discrimination against us.

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Mr. Fisher read the following statement that had been placed in his hand: "Formerly lumber from Hampton cost 2-12c. per 100 lbs, with 20 per cent rebate, making a cost equal to 50c. per M. Present tariff rate equal to 75c. per M. It was cost less to car lumber to St. Martins and freight to St. John by schooner. Total cost at present from via Parker's road to merely 41-12c. Can put car to St. John via St. Martins for 3-25c. saving 12-12c. cents. Two hundred cars will be brought this way."

Joseph Finley said the old rate on molasses to Moncton was 11c. Now, based on the highest class goods in a car, it would be 18c. It was an increase of nearly 2-12c. per gallon. He had lost a sale through the increase.

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Mr. Harris discussed the rates on coal. He said he had cut the rate one-third in some cases. Halifax had already contracted for over 100,000 tons by rail from the Intercolonial Mining Co., from Springfield, Maceran and Joggins. The miners were standing by him, and coal would be cheaper to the people in consequence. He expected to bring a great deal more to St. John. The Dominion Coal Co. complained in Nova Scotia, but he was after business. As to the whole tariff, there were reductions in many instances, and he thought the people should not complain because there were some increases. They should look at it from a broad basis. He would like to feel that the board of trade was at his back.

Geo. McKean at this stage produced a statement of freight paid on ten cars of lumber, which showed an increase of 21c. Taking Amherst as an instance, Mr. McKean said that the Amherst man's deals were not worth over \$7.50 in Halifax. The railway had no right to increase the rate. The trade could not stand it.

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Mr. McKean said that 6,000 lbs. of course would make a difference, but the rate on short distances was too high. He further remarked that Mr. Harris was talking through his hat when he talked about the steamer getting a big share of the freight. The regular steamers took very little. Deals were taken by steamers and chartered by the shippers themselves. The rate had no relation at all to the railway rate. He also raised the question of demurrage on cars of lumber waiting for discharge, and the possibility of having lumber on hand when steamers came.

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Mr. Harris contented himself with talking around the question and urging the merchants to consider the tariff and its purpose and look at the question in a broad way. There were reductions on some classes, and there was the privilege of mixed carloads, which Montreal did not enjoy. He thought the merchants ought to stand by him.

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J. F. Merritt discussed the lumber tariff. He hoped it would be made satisfactory in some manner of demurrage. He also referred to the increase of the minimum charge on small articles from 25 to 35c.

Mr. Harris replied that this was done without his knowledge, and he had not been cancelled when he heard of it.

Mr. McLaughlin pointed out that the rate on lime to Halifax had been increased \$6.00 per car, and when the tariff under which that had been done was withdrawn he could not get any rebate. He would like to know if any change had lately been made in the rate.

Mr. Harris replied that since March 1st the rate to Halifax was 10c. per 100 lbs.

Mr. Smith replied that would be \$3 per car lower than the old rate, of which he was very glad. But he had also got some plaster from Hillsboro. The old rate was 35c. the new one 55c. The rate by water was 10c. per barrel.

Mr. Harris did not think the rate had been increased. However, Mr. Robertson, the divisional freight agent, was always available and could make a special rate if necessary to secure business. They were here to get business, not to lose it.

Mr. Smith further observed that a lot of their furniture company had a lot of their goods to ship to St. John, but the new rate was prohibitory and they had arranged to have it brought by water.

Mr. Harris made no comment on this.

W. H. Thorne said he was very glad to hear that there would be a special rate as before on mixed cars of goods from St. John. Mr. Thorne drew attention to the case of Mr. O'Leary of Richibucto, who, as stated in his letter to the Sun, had to pay the first class rate on a whole car. Under what class, asked Mr. Thorne, would mixed cars now go?

Mr. Harris—Fifth class.

Mr. Thorne—Then the rate on Mr. O'Leary's car would be 13c. Instead of 20c., which he paid. But Mr. O'Leary states that the old rate was only 9c. to Kent Junction.

Mr. Harris replied that there was an increase in fifth class goods. While in others the rate is the same or advanced. They had to be governed by the basis adopted by other roads or they could not make through rates. They wanted to get into closer contact with the west and develop through business. They had made concessions. The rate on classes 1 and 2 and some others had been lowered, and the merchants would have to come up to meet him in the case of 3, 4 and 5. The present basis was necessary in dealing with western lines.

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NOVA SCOTIA.

HALIFAX, N. S., March 18.—It is reported that the steamer Alpha, the former Bermuda mail boat, and the steamer City of Ghent are chartered to go to the Klondyke.

Traffic Manager Harris of the I. C. R. was at Truro today, and met the lumber kings, who strongly protested against the new export freight tariff on lumber, which is 25 per cent. higher than as before. Mr. Harris promised to re-arrange it satisfactorily. He also met the board of trade delegation in reference to local freight rates on hay, cattle and farm produce. He said a supplementary tariff had been issued within twenty-four hours, which would straighten matters out.

NORFOLK SYDNEY, C. E., March 18.—The owners of the schooner Willie Macdonald, illegally seized by the Russian government in the Pacific waters, have been notified that the full amount of the award and costs, \$24,000, has reached Ottawa.

FREDERICTON, March 18.—Eight Scott act cases were acknowledged at the police court today, and the two men from Williamsburg under arrest for violation of the tariff laws were discharged. The prosecution failed to produce any evidence against them.

James S. Nell and wife and Joseph Walker and others went to Boston this evening to attend the sportsmen's show tomorrow afternoon the Governor and Mrs. McClellan with Mr. Barker, his honor's secretary, Comptroller and Mrs. Emmerson, Attorney General White and some other members of the government, will also leave for the hub. They will be present on Tuesday night, which has been specially set apart as New Brunswick's day at the fair.

Most of the members of assembly have gone home, and all will be off tomorrow. The next to leave will be the half company of the Infantry ordered to the Yukon. They go to Ottawa to outfit some time next week.

HALIFAX, N. S., March 20.—The steamer Osborne is off this port with a tall shaft broken, having broken adrift from the steamer Duffield, which towed the Osborne nearly a thousand miles, only to be separated from her. The Osborne, a three masted schooner, was built in the United States, and is now in the hands of the British government. It is known to be at anchor, as she broke adrift within the forty fathom line. The Osborne's shaft broke Friday, March 11th. An Allan liner declined to tow her. The Duffield was spoken Monday. The vessels were both bound for Philadelphia originally, but on March 18 threatening weather induced them to change the course for Halifax.

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