

Coal and Car Shortage in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

Winnipeg, Sept. 29.—The railway commission has been sitting in Winnipeg this week and was approached by the representatives of the organized farmers on the subject of car shortage. Chairman Carvell heard their complaint, as it were under protest, as they had not previously asked for a hearing. As a matter of fact the circumstances which made a hearing necessary are of recent occurrence and there had not been time to apply formally for a hearing.

Since September 25 there has been an embargo on grain loading on Canadian National railway lines in Alberta and more especially on what is known as the Goose Lake line, the line over which all coal from Drumheller mines must be hauled eastward and all box cars are being rushed to Drumheller for coal to the serious loss and detriment of the farmers.

Today Mr. Carvell has been closeted with railway officials and is demanding more coal for the east and it begins to look as if the farmers of the west were once more to be sacrificed for those potted provinces.

The east has known all summer that she could not get more than 2,000,000 tons of American coal as against 6,000,000 received in former years yet all summer long the western mines have been operating below capacity and would have been glad of occupation for their cars. The coal yards on the prairie provinces are all stocked up, in fact they are carrying the biggest load of coal they have ever carried having taken heed to the oft repeated warning of getting the coal out of the way of the crop. The crop along the lines of the Canadian National railways is very heavy and on this particular Goose Lake line it is the first heavy crop they have had since 1915, and very naturally there is urgent need for it to be moved quickly, yet for a week now, right at the thick of threshing not a car has been available for wheat along that line in Alberta. This delay may not only deprive farmers of immediate money receipts but it may mean a reduction in price or it may mean that they will have to stop threshing as elevators are either full to the roof or on the verge of being so.

Coal versus Wheat.

Then along comes Mr. Carvell and wants still more coal shipped east. The railway officials have been attempting to disguise the embargo on grain loading by stating that the elevators on this particular line are not full, but the embargo exists and is likely to continue unless a miners' strike comes to the rescue of the farmers. There is a miners' strike staged for next Monday and if they walk out the farmers may get their innings on cars while the dispute is being settled. It is rumored that the mine operators are not at all averse to the men going on strike, because the present rate of pay is so high that miners are abundantly supplied with money and their average of production is away below what it should be, moreover it is rumored that while the miners are nominally International Union men their sympathies are really O.B.U. and the operators would like a showdown. In fact there are rumors and counter rumors, but the concrete fact remains that if Mr. Carvell is to get the amount of coal he is calling for it is to be at the expense of western farmers in the matter of their wheat movement. A significant fact is that the daily car inspections at Winnipeg show that the Canadian National roads combined are hauling somewhat less than 50 per cent. of the grain being hauled by the C.P.R. alone.

Eastern Canada seems to have been lacking in foresight, to put it mildly, not to have taken all the coal possible during the summer months.

The Canadian National Railways, owing to the amalgamation, are in a state of flux and are not in any too good a position to handle the crop anyway.

Election at the Pas.

Word has just come in that the deferred election at the Pas has returned the Hon. Edward Brown with a very handsome majority. This is a significant fact. There is a large labor element in this constituency especially connected with the mines and every effort was put forth by labor people to win the election. The notorious F. J. Dixon, M.L.A., who was returned by such an overwhelming majority by the laborites in Winnipeg stumped the constituency for the Labor Candidate. No stone was left unturned, so that the victory of Mr. Brown shows that the public are alive to the fiasco they made of the election last summer and all other elements in the community combined effectively to defeat Labor at this bye-election. In the Pas, at least, there is no desire to help F. J. Dixon to be the next premier of Manitoba.

The old grain firm of James Carruthers and Company are opening a large private wire house here and will have as their correspondents in Chicago the firm of Jackson Bros. and in Minneapolis C. E. Lewis and Company.

Export business on the Winnipeg exchange shows no evidence of any trade with the British Isles and Canadian lake tonnage is handicapped for want of cargoes for Canadian Lake ports and a good deal of it is being chartered for taking Canadian wheat to American ports. The British buyers are evidently out to buy our wheat at their own price and if they dally too long may find that there is no tonnage available to take wheat to eastern Canadian ports.

American milling interests are keen buyers of our wheat and in the words of the immortal Mr. Dooley are taking it "in great gobs".

Express Rates Inquiry.

At the first session of the Board of Railway Commissioners held at Edmonton, Alta., last Friday, F. T. Fisher, representing the transportation section of the Board of Trade, stated that the granting of the application of the Canadian express companies for a rate boost of forty per cent. would mean that the tariff in Canada would exceed that across the border by thirty per cent.

The danger of such an adverse rate causing trade with American firms to be stimulated, was pointed out by Mr. Fisher, although F. H. Phippen, K.C., representing the applicants, later asserted that this was a matter more for the concern of the express companies than the shippers.

Regarding payment on freight shipments from the United States in Canadian currency, this being a matter that was brought up by Mr. J. Hutchinson, representing the Board of Trade, Mr. Carvell stated that there would be a conference of all railway companies within a month when some solution would be attempted. While in Washington he had discussed the question with the Inter-State Commerce Board and found that all that could be done to meet the situation created by the present exchange rate was being attempted.

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May Avert Miners' Strike.

Re-Ballot of the Men Will be Taken.

The late Mr. Labouchere used to say that politics was "the science of living from hand to mouth." If so, Mr. Lloyd George is a past master of politics. For he possesses the art of staying off a crisis in an unexampled degree. It now looks as though his genius in this regard will result in the averting altogether of the threatened miners' strike. Last Friday a decision was taken to call for a re-ballot of the miners on the question of ceasing work.

A re-ballot was expected to result in an acceptance by the men of an offer by the owners of an advance in wages of two shillings per shift when the output of coal reaches 248,000-000 tons yearly. This was the rate of the output for the first three months of the present year.

The coal strike notices which were to be effective last Saturday have been postponed for another fortnight, it was announced on Friday afternoon. This action resulted from a conference between Premier Lloyd George and representatives of the miners and owners.

The miners' conference has decided to ask the miners as a whole to vote on the question whether the dispute shall be submitted to an impartial tribunal.

Effect of Cheaper Sugar.

A despatch from Brockville, Ont., announces that Mr. J. A. Ruddick, dairy and cold storage commissioner, Ottawa, has notified the Brockville District Milk and Cream Producers' Association that the Borden Milk Company, one of the largest condensed milk operators in Canada, will close its plant at Huntingdon, Que., and that it has under consideration a twenty per cent. decrease in the production of its Ontario factories. The sweetened condensed milk, Prof. Ruddick says, has been selling for some time past on account of the sugar which it contains, but with the break in the price of sugar the demand has greatly decreased.