

# GRAIN GROWERS' TELL THEIR GRIEVANCES

## Royal Commission hears Startling Evidence from Regina Witnesses—Car Booking Crooked—Ask for Public Scales

The Royal Grain Commission which met last week had one of its most sensational sittings in this city. There appears to have been gross irregularities practiced in connection with the booking for cars and both the railway agents and elevator men have played the farmers. The commission will meet here again at an early date.

In the absence of the chairman, J. H. Miller, Mr. McNair opened the proceedings by intimating that the board did not want to hear individual grievances particularly, except where they represented a general condition. The evidence taken would be for the purpose of ascertaining whether amendments are needed to the grain act. After the arrival of the east local, Mr. Miller took his seat on the board.

**WALTER SIMPSON CALLED.**

The first witness was the president of the Regina Grain Growers' association, Walter Simpson. He testified with regard to the inspection of wheat from this province that there should be an inspection office at Broadview, as that is a division point on the C.P.R. main line.

With respect to grading Mr. Simpson advised that until a more scientific method is evolved commercial grades should be fixed by a standards board instead of by a committee of the grain exchange. Another important matter is regarding scales in elevators. Witness thought that the number nine sieve of Mr. Castle should be changed or the elevator screens should be made to conform to it, for at present those small elevators take out much more small wheat than that of the warehouse commissioner.

Regarding the distribution of cars Mr. Simpson cited a case where an elevator man at Grand Coulee ordered sixty cars and signed farmers names, and when the cars arrived he took them all himself.

As to the competition among elevators he thought that the Regina Milling Co. paid higher prices for wheat than the elevators.

Owing to the shortage of cars it is necessary to ship about half the crop through the elevators which occasions a loss of one and a quarter millions a year to the farmers.

Witness complained that at Condit this season the C.P.R. agent gave farmers' cars to the elevator men, because he claimed that the railway company could not wait for the farmer to load.

Respecting the weighing of grain he thought that the scales should be in a light place so that the farmer could see the weigh man. This could not be done at Condit.

Witness did not think that the farmers had confidence in Mr. Castle, for as he and Mr. Horn have their offices in the same building his sympathies would naturally be with the worth whom he is constantly assisting.

**LUMSDEN WITNESS.**

The second witness was John Martin representing the Lumsden association. In 1906 he put about three thousand bushels of wheat in the elevator and when it was shipped out all the cars graded different. He did not know whether the elevator man switched his wheat in the loading.

Another complaint was that grading is easy at the opening of the season and as the season advances the grading stiffens. This should not be and could not be if the standards were adhered to. With regard to discolored wheat he did not think that the rippling of the bran, about the milling properties of the grain.

The chairman—the evidence of the millers is that a dampness or a very light frost injures wheat for milling purposes.

Mr. Martin—For this grievance a sample market should be established at Winnipeg.

Mr. McNair—Have you considered that a sample market would allow indiscriminate mixing, and the whole transportation system would be tied up by having to delay all cars at Winnipeg?

Mr. Martin—As wheat is the principal freight of railways in this country they should be compelled to provide elevators at all shipping points with car load bins so that when a farmer applies for a car he can commence to haul his grain and place it in the elevator. On arrival of the car the company can commence to load at once and thus have two days on each car. This would greatly aid transportation, and remedy the demurrage grievance.

Mr. McNair—The average elevator handles so little wheat in a season now where there are several companies buying that they cannot afford to put the wheat through the hands for less than the present rate and they have to make wide round between street and track prices. Then as to the railways going into the elevator business, the companies are at present devising means to be relieved of handling the terminal elevators which they do not want to handle. This would be handled in the future will probably be handled by private interests.

Mr. Martin—That would be disastrous to farmers' interests in shipping their own wheat.

Regarding the booking for cars at Flag stations, Mr. Martin cited Disley where the cars were booked for at Lumsden. The farmers sign the register for cars at Lumsden and the elevator men have been in the habit of dealing with the train crews.

Mr. Miller—Do you think that the train men took tips from the elevator men?

Mr. Martin—I would not say that they did, but they gave the elevator men the cars without the regulations being complied with.

I took this matter up with Mr. Castle and, (handing the chairman the letter in reply) he is his indelible comment on this phase of the shipping conditions.

Another instance at Disley was where the elevator man took more than his share of the cars.

Mr. McNair—You know I suppose, that Mr. Castle has no power to interfere in shipping matters at a flag station. Will you suggest some change to the grain act in this respect?

Mr. Martin—I think that some merchant in the town where there is no agent should have charge of the car book and shippers should not have to go to another town to register for cars.

Witness cited a case with regard to elevator weights where the elevator man took all odd pounds, sometimes as much as half a bushel.

Mr. Miller—Did you study the act to see what protection you have under the regulations?

Mr. Martin—No, I did not notice that I could stop this dockage.

Mr. Miller—Then we must not condemn the grain act for it protects you against these practices and provides redress.

Witness continuing his evidence referred to the fact that in one season he had put his grain in a special bin and when the returns came from Fort William it had overrun the elevator weight here by seventy-five bushels, and the elevator man had kept the extra amount.

Mr. Miller—H that wheat had leaked out en route the elevator man would have been liable to you. That is one of the risks he takes. Would you want to amend the act so that he would not be liable for any loss?

Mr. Martin—I do not know that I would, but there should be some change in the whole system.

Mr. Miller—What remedy would you suggest?

Mr. Martin—We must be independent of the elevator companies, and the railways should become identified with this phase of the grain trade.

Mr. Miller—That is drastic.

Re the protection of grain in elevators, and shipping grain to the terminal elevators, Mr. Castle would not rule on this. Letters pertaining to this were given to the commissioners.

Witness would suggest that provision be made for elevators to ship grain that was leaking or out of condition in order to save it.

**C.P.R. EVIDENCE.**

R. J. Burdett, C.P.R. agent here was next called.

It was charged by Mr. Simpson that on Nov. 15 cars were cancelled on account of a storm.

Witness said that he did not know much about the car book as it was kept at the yard office. The book, however, showed that on Nov. 14, four cars were placed on Nov. 20th, 6 cars were placed and removed because they were not loaded. One car on the 14th was given to three elevators, it was moved on the 15th and then spotted for a farmer after then waiting three hours hours it was given to the mill.

Cars were not allowed to stand long, if they were not loaded within a reasonable length of time they were taken away and distributed to even up the supply elsewhere. Regina has had more than her share for cars originated here. In percentage of cars received Regina was ahead of all other points.

Mr. Miller—Have you any trouble with the act?

Mr. Burdett—Farmers will often order cars and then will not call, the cars, after remaining unclaimed for three hours go by default.

Witness said that he had no instructions from the company to have cars placed at flag stations. He orders the distributor to notify conductor to spot cars.

Mr. McNair—What system do you think would work?

Mr. Burdett—To chalk mark cars or lock them and give the key to the man who ordered the car. Farmers order cars, and we cannot very well refuse to ship a car once it is loaded, there is a bad enough odor now.

**MR. MOSS.**

This witness had a car placed for him on the 10th of December and did not load it. When asked why he stated that he did not know it was there. He was in town on Monday and was told that the car would be spotted on Wednesday. Coming to the city on that date he found that the car had been loaded by another man on the previous day and shipped out. He never saw a notice of car allotment posted in the C.P.R. yard office.

Mr. Burdett recalled that he saw the notices up in their offices. Several farmers said that they did not see the notices.

**A SKENE.**

A Skene of Grand Coulee testified regarding grades, could not see why these dropped when nearing the close of navigation. He does not consider that Grand Coulee gets fair treatment in the matter of car distribution. At Pense he noticed that up to a certain date they got 61 cars, Regina 623, and Grand Coulee 56.

The following resolution from the Grand Coulee Grain Growers' Association were submitted by Mr. Skene:

"That whereas general dissatisfaction prevails throughout this district with the weights received at the district elevators doing business at this point, he it resolved that the government be asked to provide scales operated by an independent party which weight should stand in all cases."

"Whereas it is found that wheat which graded No. 1 at the beginning of the shipping season has during the past season dropped to No. 2 and lower when large shipments began, thus entailing a loss to the farmer, as well as causing a feeling of distrust in the farmers of the grading system."

"We, the grain growers of Grand Coulee are of the opinion that the system of grading adopted at the beginning of the season be continued until the close."

**JAS. RUSSELL.**

Mr. Russell of Craven told how the elevator regulations affected him this year. He had no 1 hard wheat this year, and was told by the elevator man that he could not handle it. It was therefore up to him to ship it himself which he did and got the highest grade. He said that there were about 200,000 bushels of wheat for shipment this year at Craven. They had some trouble in getting cars spotted. Mr. Russell handed the chairman a copy of a resolution respecting government weights similar to that passed by the Grand Coulee association.

**W. NIBLOCK.**

Another Grand Coulee representative was Mr. Niblock who was very strong for government scales. He had taken a load to the elevator and had weighed it on route and he found that the elevator had beat him out of 15 bushels on a car load. A neighbor of his had been robbed of eight bushels to the load and after letting the thing go for a while told the elevator man how he caught him, with the result the farmer got the whole amount allowed him. Mr. Niblock was well satisfied with the Fort William weights and dockage.

**D. MCCUSKER.**

Mr. McCusker was brief in his evidence which was to the effect that the remedy for short weights lay in procuring government scales.

The commission then adjourned till the following morning.

**MORNING SESSION.**

The first witness called on Friday morning was W. T. Mooney of Grand Coulee. He loads the bulk of his wheat at the platform and ships it himself. He would dispose of all his crop this way but he cannot get cars. He thought that his town was discriminated against in the distribution of cars. In shipping to the lakes he was well satisfied with the weights. He noticed that the grading tightens up as the close of navigation approaches.

Mr. McNair—Can you suggest the reason?

Mr. Mooney—I thought it was careless, but the evidence has shown that it might be to enable the terminal elevators to come out right on the wheat they carry over in storage till spring.

With regard to shrinkage witness thought that there could not be much objection to small dockage. Asked by the chairman if he thought the principal of allowing shrinkage in buying goods was generally observed, witness said that he did not think it was.

Taking up the question of car assignment witness produced the order book of Grand Coulee. With respect to farmers ordering cars there is a provision whereby a farmer may give an elevator man power of attorney to sign for him. Turning to a certain page he showed where names were signed early in September before there was wheat threshed in the district. The names were those of farmers but they did not sign the book, and they gave no power of attorney. There were even names of farmers down who have not shipped grain from that town for two or more years.

Mr. Goldie—What was the object for getting the cars? Was there collusion between the agent of the C.P.R. and the elevator man, witness answered that it looked like it and the arrangement must have been for the agent to give the elevator man the cars as they were needed and the distribution bears that theory out.

To remedy this witness suggested that there should be no booking of cars till a shortage occurred. He cited then an instance where he had booked for three cars and he did not know that he could claim only one which he got, the agent striking off the others. Witness should have got the next in order which he at the bottom of the list, but the agent struck his name off there, and he then complained to Mr. Castle. The agent then informed him that he would get no more cars for the season.

Mr. Miller—Were you satisfied with Mr. Castle's conduct in this matter?

Mr. Mooney—Yes. He told me the superintendent of the railway would investigate the matter, but nothing was done. He did not think that such a man should be in charge of a station.

**A BRIBE.**

Witness stated that C.P.R. agent told him that he could have cars if he put his wheat through the elevator and another farmer stated that the agent said he would have cars by paying two or three dollars.

**W. NIBLOCK.**

This witness stated that regarding the booking he knew of one man who had his name cancelled after the car was loaded and shipped. The matter was brought to the attention of the farmer whose name was signed and he went to the agent, and asked about it. The agent contended that a farmer named McFadden had signed. The farmer, however, protested that he had not, and af-

terwards the book in the remarks column opposite this entry stated: "Car shipped to Moose Jaw and order." This was done to cover up the conspiracy and collusion.

**MR. MOTHERWELL.**

The minister of agriculture offered to suggest certain changes in the grain act. One thing that he would recommend would be that the survey board should be a permanent body and married officials, who could give all their time to the grain trade. He believed that the grain trade had now reached such proportions that this was a realistic necessity. The place of meeting is also a matter for consideration and it does not look right at least for this board to meet in Mr. Horn's office and deliver judgment on his disputed grades. The farmers of the country should have as much confidence in the survey board as they have at present in the registrar at Fort William.

**AGAINST MIXING.**

Mr. Motherwell advised that the wheat from the west should be closely followed by government supervision to tide-water. The mixing at Winnipeg should be prohibited. The act should provide that once wheat is on the track shippers must take chances on the grade.

**ABOLISH AGENCY.**

Witness urged the irregularities in booking which is almost all over the country, would urge that the privilege of farmers appointing another person to sign for them should be cancelled. This would be a hardship on a few but the majority would be benefited.

**PAY CHARGE.**

Every applicant for a car should be charged a fee of two dollars and if the car is not used he should then forfeit the amount. Those who used the car would have the money returned. This, Mr. Motherwell, thought would protect bona fide shippers and careless farmers.

**INVESTIGATE CAR SHORTAGE.**

The government should ask the railway commission to investigate the present car shortage in Canada and ascertain if the rolling stock can be obtained by the companies if they want to procure them.

Regarding the demurrage system he would not say that the railways should pay for demurrage on cars on the ground where it seemed reasonable, but he doubted the wisdom of such a course.

Mr. Miller—Would you favor giving the railways two years' notice that such a regulation would be enforced?

Mr. Motherwell—Yes, I think that they might work out the grain trade back to where it was a few years ago, and the step would be injurious to the farmers interests.

**STORAGE ELEVATORS.**

A feature of the grain trade in the near future will be to provide storage elevators with terminal facilities so that the wheat can be stored over the winter. This will be necessary if the railways cannot keep pace with the growth of the wheat industry.

Farmers would like above all things to see Winnipeg a sample market, but the delay to the transit of grain makes this almost impracticable.

**AGAINST WEIGH SCALES.**

Mr. Motherwell is opposed to the government furnishing weigh scales as suggested by resolutions of the various associations. It would be difficult to get honest men to operate these scales for one thing and the expenditure would be unimportant. The grain men should not have to accept the weights of a scale other than their own and it would not be right to compel them to do this.

In his opinion many of the evils of shipping would be remedied if there were plenty of cars.

Mr. Morton—This would close the spread between track and street prices, for the elevator's would know that they would not have to keep the wheat long.

Mr. Motherwell—That is the way I view this matter.

It being noon the commission adjourned till 1.30.

**R. MOORE.**

This witness wanted an order book kept at flag stations to be in charge of the section boss.

**W. MORTON.**

Mr. Morton of Richardson testified regarding dockage. He had three bushels taken from one load.

Mr. Goldie—Did you know at the time that you could appeal to Mr. Castle and that by sending a sample Mr. Horn would set the dockage to be made?

Mr. Morton—I did not know that I could get redress in this manner. So I just quit hauling to this man.

**REGINA MILLS.**

Mr. Smith of the Regina Flour Mills swore that they were not members of the grain exchange or any other combination of grain dealers. They do not get the Fowler daily price letter but they set their own prices without knowing what any other buyers pay. He was well satisfied with Fort William regulations.

Mr. Miller—Have representations ever been made to you to fix prices?

Mr. Smith—Only suggestions.

**ELEVATOR MAN.**

Mr. O'Leary of the Winnipeg Elevator Co. was next called. He was questioned by Mr. McNair. Asked if he ever kept from the farmer the odd pounds in a load he said that he takes everything under the half bushel.

In shipping from special blended wheat he makes the farmer stand the loss.

Mr. McNair—Is that the way you interpret the grain act?

Mr. O'Leary—Yes.

Mr. McNair—Do you ever run over in your weights?

Mr. O'Leary—Yes.

Mr. McNair—Who gets the over weight?

Mr. O'Leary—We do.

Mr. McNair—Do you get prices from Winnipeg?

Mr. O'Leary—Yes, from Mr. Fowler but not since Dec. 18th, and then only the track prices. I have to wire my firm for them now.

Mr. McNair—Did you get the prices from Mr. Fowler?

Mr. O'Leary—No, the Western Canada Flour Mills Co.'s agent got it and he sent me a signed bill.

Mr. Miller—Do you know why the Fowler letter has not been coming since Dec. 18?

Mr. O'Leary—No.

At this stage of the sitting the adjournment took place to allow the commission to proceed to Moose Jaw as they wish to keep their dates. Although the evidence was not quite all in they were nearly through and will finish on their return from the Soo line.

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