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The Transportation Problem

WE have had occasion several times to deal with this important matter and to point out wherein the Canadian farmer is hampered by unfair railway rates in carrying his produce to the consumer. This unfairness is all the more noticeable when a comparison is made in freight rates as in force in Canada and the United States. And a still more flagrant state of affairs is shown when we compare the rates made by our Canadian railways bonused by Canadian taxpayers, to the producers in the United States and in Ontario. This was clearly put by Mr. McNiell at the Fruit Growers' Convention, a report of which has been continued in these columns during the past two weeks. The freight on apples from Ontario to Liverpool ranges from 85c. to \$1.25 per bbl., while from the United States, as far west as the Mississippi, 56c. to 80c. are the figures. Then as to the discrimination on our own railways in favor of the American producer, Mr. McNiell showed that corn could be shipped from Detroit to Quebec for 11 cents, while from Essex County just across the river the rate was 18 cents. For this reason American corn could be laid down cheaper throughout Ontario than could corn grown in Essex County.

Other instances could be given to show that this discrimination extends over a wide range of products and places the Canadian farmer at a decided disadvantage as compared with his competitor to the south of the line. At the Provincial Winter Fair, Mr. Thomas Crawford, M.P.P., stated that in the cattle trade there was most unfair discrimination by our railroads. For example, it now costs from \$10 to \$20 more in freight on a car of cattle from Listowel, Ont., to Boston, than from Chicago. Then the freight on cattle from Toronto to St. John, Portland or Boston over the Canadian roads is as high as the Chicago rate over the same railroads. Then in addition to this the Canadian shipper meets with another setback at the seaboard. During the past season at certain times it has cost from \$5 to \$8 per head more to ship from Canadian ports to Great Britain than from American ports. Thus the Canadian farmer is handicapped all along the way and it is time these disabilities were removed. All this extra freight comes back on the producer and puts him in a position that he cannot compete successfully with producers to the south of the line.

But what is the remedy? This question has been under discussion for several years back and no remedy

is yet forthcoming. Mr. Crawford, we think, voiced the feeling of the great mass of the farmers of this country in regard to this matter when he stated that the Government should regulate freight rates both on the ocean and on the railroads. This appears to be the only way of obtaining a satisfactory solution to this problem. Railway competition has been without avail as the railroads unite to keep up rates so that there seems to be no redress except by a body with power to force these big corporations to give justice and fair-play to the Canadian producer. Given fair-play in the carrying of his produce to the consumer we think the Canadian farmer can hold his own with any producer the world over. But these shackles must be removed and it is the duty of the Government of the day to step in and adjust rates on a fair and equitable basis. Our farmers and producers do not want more than their rights. They are quite willing that the railroads should prosper and make a fair profit on their investment, but in doing so there should be no discrimination against the people who have given largely to build these roads.

We believe the farmers of this country are more united on this subject than ever before, and are determined that some remedy shall be forthcoming, and that at no distant date. Their efforts just now are being focussed in one direction, and that is in demanding that a railway commission be appointed to regulate and control rates. At the fruit growers' meeting a resolution was adopted asking that such a commission be granted. At a large public gathering at Guelph during the Winter Fair, when representative agriculturists and breeders from all parts of the Dominion were present, a resolution making the same request of the Government was unanimously adopted, and which was as follows:

"That this convention of Ontario farmers, representing every county from Essex to Glengarry, is of opinion that the Dominion Government should take immediate action for the purpose of placing Canadian farmers in at least as good a position as their American rivals in the matter of transporting their products of the farm to the European market; and that, to this end, we believe power should be obtained at the forthcoming session of the Dominion Parliament for the appointment of a commission which shall have full power to regulate and control freight rates on Canadian railroads, and the allotment of space and charges for the same in ships sailing from Canadian ports; and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Dominion Government."

Truly the time for action has arrived. Our politicians have been dangling with this question long enough. The pros and cons have been fully and