

Sir,—Why should the fishermen on the Gaspé coast be discriminated against on their shipments of fresh fish, when competing with Halifax shipments?

Owing to our long and close relations with the Gaspé coast, we feel the matter should be placed before the public. Perhaps it may be one of the many reasons why the railways are losing so much money.

As is well known, shipments of fresh fish are sent by express, it being necessary to get them on the market as fresh as possible. The Nova Scotian fishermen, shipping through large firms, are charged on the nett weight only, whilst the Gaspé fishermen are charged on the gross weight; in other words, the Gaspé fishermen pay for 25 per cent more weight.

Thus a shipment of fresh fish from Halifax, say, to Toronto, of 10,000 lbs. of fish, would be charged \$1.75 per 100 lbs. on 10,000 lbs., whilst the same shipment when shipped from the Gaspé coast would have to pay on 12,500 lbs. weight. The rate from Montreal to Toronto is \$1.50 per 100 lbs. the distance from Halifax to Toronto about 1,100 miles, and from Montreal to Toronto about 340 miles. The difference in the weight means that, to ship 1,100 miles, costs less than to ship 340 miles. In other words, from Halifax the fresh fish is carried about 750 miles for nothing.

Now this discrimination is, to our mind, unconstitutional, as well as illegal. No public carrying company has the right to make one firm pay on 10,000 lbs. and then turn around and make another firm pay on 12,500 lbs. on identically the same class of goods, with identically the same weight.

Is it to be supposed the Railway Commissioners are not aware of this underhand competition? We can hardly think they would countenance such an unjust proceeding against the fishermen of the Gaspé coast, who have to work just as hard as the Nova Scotian fishermen to make a living.

The next question is: Does the Minister of Railways know of it? It is evident some one is at the bottom of it, but who? One thing is certain, the fishermen on the Gaspé coast, when they learn how they are handicapped, will want to have it changed.

Cheap food is a great necessity these days, and everything should be done to put competition on a fair footing and show no favor, so that prices may be kept down to reasonable figures.

I call the attention of the Minister of Railways to this discriminatory rate which exists as between the coast of Gaspé and Nova Scotia. I stated a moment ago that the reason why the railway situation in that district was at a low ebb was due to the original interference of the great fish firm of Robin. Quite a change has taken place since the completion of the railway in 1910. When I was elected for the county of Gaspé in 1896 I met not tens but hundreds of people on the coast who never had seen a red cent in their lives. They were paid in effects by the firm. There were thousands of my electors who had never travelled even as far as New Brunswick. The town of Campbellton, the town of Dalhousie across

[Mr. Lemieux.]

the bay, were mere geographical expressions to them, because they had no means of transportation. They were kept under the yoke by the powerful firm, just as the trappers in the West were kept under the yoke of the Hudson Bay Company in days gone by. The situation has changed and to-day I can say that I represent a free community. But in 1896 they were not free and independent electors. They were not free subjects of His Majesty the King. There is a book which some day will be written on the relations of that big firm with the fishermen of Gaspé. It is said that reality is sometimes stranger than fiction. No one knows the misery that was endured by the fishermen of the Gaspé coast. As far back as the Conquest in 1759, because that firm came from Jersey about the time of the Conquest, it practically owned the land and the sea; indeed it owned the people. Transportation and commerce is after all the great avenue of civilization, and the construction of a railway in the Gaspé peninsula has been the means of bringing that population within the confines of civilization. I am proud to say that I represent to-day a highly educated population—I mean highly educated in so far as elementary education is understood. We have schools, we have convents, we have high schools. We have to-day a fine hardy type of Canadian on the coast of Gaspé. I say to the Government in all sincerity: Complete that work, take over that railway and make it a part of the National Railways system, where it belongs, and where it was intended to be from the beginning at the time of Confederation. Then, Sir, the Government of the day will have done its duty towards one of the most remarkable sections of the Dominion, rich beyond description of natural wealth. I speak this evening as a Canadian, and I say it is not pleasant to find that big American firms have laid their hands on the peninsula of Gaspé. They are doing it on the quiet. They are taking our natural resources. Yes, American companies and syndicates are operating and exploiting the resources of that fine territory. I say to the Government it is within their power to give our people the rights which appertain to them as members of the great Canadian family.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I have been asked by the Board of Trade of the city of Quebec to support the demand which has just been presented by the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Lemieux). The president, a few days ago, sent to the Minister of Railways (Mr.