

ALBERTA ADDRESSES OTTAWA ON MANITOBA GRAIN ACT

Geo. Harcourt, Deputy Minister of agriculture, L. P. Strong, President, Alberta Pacific Elevator Co., and Ed. J. Fream, Secretary of the United Farmers of Alberta, composed a delegation which waited on Sir Richard Cartwright, Minister of Trade and Commerce, on April 27th, in reference to changes in the Manitoba Grain Act as it affects shipments of westbound grain.

Premier Rutherford and Attorney General Cross, of Alberta, were also present at the conference together with many of the Federal members of the Western provinces. The delegates of the Grain Growers' Associations of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, who were in Ottawa, were invited to attend and were present during the conference.

The delegation is the outcome of a conference of Elevator Owners, Grain Dealers, Railroads, Banks Boards of Trade of Vancouver, Calgary and other cities, farmers and members of the Alberta Government held in Calgary early last February, arranged for by Premier Rutherford of Alberta to consider the feasibility of an outlet for Alberta grain via Pacific Coast.

The delegation laid before the Minister a series of resolution passed at the conference which they supplemented with a memorandum of suggested changes in the Grain Act. The resolutions were as follows:—

Messrs. Harcourt and Strong in speaking to their memorandum presented a glowing account of the advantages that would assure to the Alberta farmers by the opening of the West?rn route and tried to convey the impression that the Manitoba grain Act was the only obstacle in the way.

Mr. Strong stated that at present there was a saving of 6 cents a bushel in freight rates from Alberta points to Liverpool via Vancouver as compared to shipments east. Asked by Dr. McIntyre if the farmers got the advantage of that difference—he replied not until there was a change in the system of supplying cars.

(One cannot help wonder if they would get it then.)

The feature of the conference was the "clean bill of health", given to the elevator owners by Mr. Fream. His line of argument was very similar to that advanced by the grain dealers and railroad representatives at the conference held at Ottawa a year ago. It must be refreshing to those interests to have the secretary of a farmers association of the Western Provinces "patting" them on the back.

AN ERROR

"Mossback" brings the notice of The Guide to a typographical error in his letter headed "A Word of Caution" which appeared in last month's issue. First sentence of third paragraph should read: "If we had sold the former amount (150 million bushels) instead of the latter (100 million) we would have received about 25 per cent. per bushel less for the crop."

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BULK-HEADING OF CARS JUDGMENT.

The Chief Commissioner:—

The bulkheading of cars is a convenient practice for grain-growers. It permits the individual shipper to forward various kinds or grades of grain separate, in one car; or two or more shippers to club together and ship various kinds of grades, and keep their respective shipments separate. For this privilege the Railway Companies' tariffs show an extra charge of 1 cent per 100 lbs., and a specific charge of \$3.00 at the terminal to each bulkheaded car. The complainants allege these charges to be excessive, at the same time admitting the carriers' right for some additional compensation. No delay or expense is imposed upon the carrier at the point of origin; the bulkheading is done by the shipper, he also finding the material. It costs no more to haul the car to the terminal, but it is there that the additional burden is imposed upon the carriers. Many of these cars contain shipments for different elevators. In 1986, one hundred and fifty-six bulkhead cars had to be shunted to different elevators, and it is for this extra shunting, and to the damage done the lining of the car that the carrier charges the 1 cent per 100 lbs. The \$3.00 specific charge per car is paid by the Railway Companies to the Elevator Company for the delay to the latter in unloading and elevating different kinds or grades of grain from the same car.

Much evidence was given on behalf of the railway companies at the hearing, and the necessary movement of the cars at the terminal fully explained; the delays to the operation of the elevators, were gone into fully, and from a letter dated July 20th, 1908, from the Chief Grain Inspector at Fort William, the extract is taken:—

"I have just completed the statement for the whole crop from September 1st, 1907, to July 15th, 1908. The total number of cars received over the C.P.R. is 34,014, and of these 1855 had partitions in them, I find by enquiring at the elevators that the unloading of each partitioned car delays the elevator from 15 to 20 minutes, and while this partition car in the shunt is being unloaded, all the other shovellers and employees in the elevator are lying idle."

The Inspector deals fully with other branches of the system and states that, in his opinion, it is a pity that the shipping of grain in partitioned cars cannot be wholly stopped.

It was stated at the hearing that the \$3.00 charges did not reimburse the elevator company, and the railway companies expressed a desire that the Board should wholly prohibit the practice of bulkheading.

The general convenience of the whole of those who ship grain is the matter to be considered, and in the movement of a heavy crop to the head of the lakes, in a short season, any delay in the elevation of one car delays the whole line; that on the Canadian Pacific 5½ per cent. and on the Canadian Northern 9 1-3 per cent. were bulkheaded cars for the season ending July 15th, 1908 shows there must have been considerable delay at the elevators. There does not appear sufficient evidence upon this record for the Board to say that the system should be prohibited, but I am of the opinion that enough has been shown to enable one to say that, during the movement of a very heavy crop, the Railway Companies would be acting entirely in the interests of the public, as a whole, if they withdraw the privilege of bulkheading.

The main question is not that 5½ or 9½ per cent of the grain may escape elevator charges at points of origin, but that no impediment to the flow of the whole crop to the lake elevators should be permitted.

The Railway Companies may, in the meantime, be left to continue the existing practice, but the Board cannot make any reduction in the tolls charged.

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