

The Car Shortage Question.

The question of the shortage of cars for the transportation of grain by rail from Georgian Bay ports by rail to the seaboard for export, and the allegation of the Dominion Millers' Association that the railway companies, particularly the G.T.R., were discriminating in favor of export grain over that required for millers' use, has raised considerable discussion of late. The first matter was brought to the attention of the Board of Railway Commissioners by A. A. Wright, Toronto, whose letter is given on pg. 601, and was discussed at a meeting between representatives of the Dominion Marine Association and the G.T.R., in Montreal. The second matter was brought to the attention of the Board of Railway Commissioners by the Secretary of the Dominion Millers' Association in a letter dated Sept. 14 which, however, was not forwarded until Sept. 22, when additional details were given. The allegations contained in this complaint set forth that the G.T.R. was delaying the shipment to local points by not supplying the necessary cars to load the grain at the elevators, and was supplying at the same time cars for export shipment to New England ports, thus giving them the preference and putting the millers to serious inconvenience and loss. Several specific instances of delays in shipments were mentioned, particularly from Midland, Ont. The letters further set forth that on Aug. 19, the G.T.R. was asked to put the moving of grain for the millers on the same footing as for export, and suggesting that if any preference were given at all it should be in favor of local shipments whether from elevators or country points. The G.T.R. replied declining to give the assurance asked for. The C.P.R. was asked to give an assurance that no preference would be given in the car supply for flour over grain at Owen Sound, Ont., or for export grain either at Owen Sound or country points, but had not at Sept. 22 given any answer. The millers, therefore, asked the Board to make orders granting them relief.

The following was issued by the Secretary of the Board of Railway Commissioners under date of Oct. 28:—"The Board has received complaints or representations from the Dominion Millers' Association and other persons and bodies upon the subjects of the shortage and distribution of railway cars and rolling stock. In the opinion of the Board, these questions involve so many interests that they cannot satisfactorily be determined by the Board merely upon a hearing as between one interest and the railway companies. The Board is also of opinion that it can ascertain the facts and be placed in a position to take any action that may seem proper, better and more quickly by sending its traffic officer, who understands the records of railway companies, to gather all possible information and to go to such places as may be necessary for the purpose, than upon a formal hearing before the Board. The Board has, therefore, made an order in the matter, and will be glad to have the Dominion Millers' Association, or any of its members, or any other persons or bodies interested in the complaints or representations made, furnish any information or make any suggestions to its traffic officer that the association or its members, or other complainant, may desire to furnish or make. The Board has directed its traffic officer to furnish, as quickly as possible from time to time, without waiting to exhaust all the subjects of inquiry, such facts as, in his opinion, will place the Board in a position to act speedily. The Board also thinks it extremely probable that great injury and inconvenience are being caused to many interests by want of a sufficient supply of cars; but that the subject is such a wide one and affects so many interests, that there is great

danger of causing injury in other directions by hasty action. The Board therefore does not feel warranted in taking any action, until it sees that, in justice to all interests, it can properly do so. The order just issued affects only the two railway companies named therein, namely, the G.T.R. Co., and the C.P.R. Co., and is confined to the Province of Ontario, in order to limit the inquiry as far as it can reasonably be done."

Four orders were issued directing the Chief Traffic Officer to hold an investigation. Two of these were directed to the C.P.R. Co., and two to the G.T.R. Co.

The sitting of the Board to hear evidence on the complaint was opened in the G.T.R. Board Room, Montreal, Nov. 8, all the commissioners attending. E. Primeau, acting Secretary, and J. Hardwell, Chief Traffic Officer, were also present. The interested parties were represented as follows:—Dominion Millers' Association—G. Goldie, President; C. B. Watts, Secretary; J. W. Flavell, Lindsay, Ont.; and D. Plewes, Toronto. G.T.R.—M. K. Cowan, Assistant Solicitor; J. W. Loud, Freight Traffic Manager; J. Pullen, Assistant Freight Traffic Manager; J. E. Dalrymple, General Freight Agent; M. C. Sturtevant, Car Service Agent; and A. F. Read, Foreign Freight Agent.

The representatives of the milling interests placed the facts of their case before the Commission, which had been furnished with an interim report by Mr. Hardwell, dated Nov. 6.

J. W. Loud, in presenting the case for the G.T.R., pointed out that the Manitoba crop was not only heavier, but it was moving three weeks earlier than usual. The exporters demanded that it be moved. Fall fairs, the apple crop, etc., all came along at the same time, bringing about a congestion of traffic. Locomotive power had to be transferred from freight to passenger service to move the trains and as a consequence the company was charged with discriminating against the millers' interests, because the millers of Ontario, like other interests, were not able to get enough cars to supply their wants. He further stated that it was impossible to purchase rolling stock to meet the requirements of this traffic, after it was learned that the crops were going to be exceptionally heavy. Dealing with the question of traffic over the system during Sept. and Oct., he gave a statement showing that of the freight moved the following ratio applied: Millers' wheat, 23.7; export, 45; United States domestic, 31½. These figures proved he thought, that, considering the big export business done, and the comparatively small amount of milling, the millers were not being discriminated against, or they would not have 23.7% of the traffic handled. He also pointed out that the Canada Atlantic Ry. had entered into contracts for the moving of grain from Depot Harbor, for which the G.T.R. was now responsible. The G.T.R. had cancelled some of these obligations representing probably the moving of 1,000,000 bush.

M. K. Cowan also addressed the commission for the railway, pointing out that the company was under contract to supply a large amount of exports to steamship companies. This obligation had to be met, despite the contentions of the millers. If the company could keep enough rolling stock on its lines to meet all demands, then both exporters and millers, as well as fruit growers and others, would have no grounds for the complaint that the railway was not giving them necessary cars. But no company would be so foolish as to keep rolling stock idle for seven or eight months of the year, unless the receipts obtained from the movement of traffic was sufficiently large during the three or four emergency months to pay for the months the cars and locomotives were not in use. From March to Sept. of this year the company had

a surplus of cars, and now there was a shortage, not due to the short sight of the management, but to the rush of all interests to have their produce moved before the close of navigation.

Additional evidence was taken by the Commission Nov. 9, and a further interim report upon this phase of the question was presented by Mr. Hardwell, Nov. 13.

The Board issued the following order Nov. 15:—"In the matter of the complaint of the Dominion Millers' Association, under the Railway Act, 1903, to the Board as set out in letters to the Board of Sept. 14 and 22, 1905, against the G.T.R. Co., alleging delay in the shipment of ex-lake grain from Georgian Bay and Lake Huron elevator ports and discrimination in favor of exporters as against the millers of Ontario in the allotment of empty cars for such grain. This complaint having come on for hearing before the Board at Montreal, on Nov. 9, in presence of counsel for the G.T.R. Co. and the representatives of the Dominion Millers' Association and the Shipping Federation of Canada; upon reading the order of the Board, dated Oct. 25, directing its Chief Traffic Officer, among other things, to inquire respecting alleged discrimination by the G.T.R. Co. in the distribution or allotment of its freight cars; and upon reading the reports of the Chief Traffic Officer, dated Nov. 6 and 13, and it appearing that the G.T.R. Co., in the distribution and allotment of its freight cars for the carriage of grain brought by lake shipments to certain points on its system, has discriminated unjustly, and is continuing and proposes still to continue to discriminate unjustly against the flour-milling industry in Ontario and in favor of shipments for export from Montreal and Portland, Me. Now, therefore, the Board doth order:

That if at any time after notice of this order, and before Jan. 31, 1906, the G.T.R. Co. fails to furnish, at any of the following points on its system, viz.: Midland, Collingwood, Meaford and Point Edward, Ont., sufficient empty cars to fill all shipping orders then on file with the said company at any such point, such cars as are furnished shall be apportioned among such shipping orders which have then been so filed for more than one day, at such port, in the order of filing until one car has been allotted to each order, after which the remaining cars, if any, shall be apportioned pro rata among the remainder of such orders which have been so on file for more than one day and which have not then been filled. This operation shall be repeated from day to day so long as the supply of cars is less than the requirements. Provided, always, that the railway company may be allowed to utilize its equipment by departing from the order of filing as aforesaid:—(a) So as to furnish loads of suitable weight for cars of capacity of less than 30 tons each which would otherwise be idle while waiting their turn; (b) To furnish loads for cars so defective as to be unfit for the carriage of grain in bulk, and (c) To clear elevator bins of remnants of grain when such bins are required during open navigation for the immediate reception of grain of another kind or grade for which other bins are not available, the total of such remnants not to exceed three carloads on any one day from any one bin. That no shipping order for grain shall be considered to have been properly filed under the foregoing provisions until the grain is in the elevator from which it is to be shipped, or in a ship or vessel then in actual process of unloading into such elevator.

It will be observed that the above order deals with only one feature of the car shortage situation, which in view of the early closing of navigation was taken up first. On Nov. 16 we were advised that the enquiry into the complaint of alleged general shortage of equipment was being proceeded with.