

Relief of Grain Congestion in Goose Lake District.

An act passed by the House of Commons and Senate was assented to Mar. 7, by which the following section was added to the Railway Act:

"317A. If the company is unable or fails to provide sufficient facilities for the movement of grain from the western provinces to the elevators at the head of Lake Superior, or to destinations east thereof, after the close of navigation on the Great Lakes and before the next harvest, and grain in certain sections or districts cannot by reason thereof be marketed, the Board (of Railway Commissioners) may require the said company to furnish all facilities within its powers for the carriage of such grain in such sections or districts to any intermediate point or points of interchange with another company or any terminal elevator, and there to make delivery thereof to such other company or companies or to such elevator for carriage by such other company or companies as the Board may direct; and the Board may require such other company or companies to transport such grain and supply the necessary cars and engines therefor, and the rates lawfully published and filed by the company in default and obtaining on its route shall apply over the joint route or routes so directed and shall be apportioned between the companies as the Board may direct."

The Board of Railway Commissioners' Action.

Sir Henry Drayton, Chief Railway Commissioner, gave the following decision Mar. 4: The Board is advised that bill 47, as passed by the House of Commons, Mar. 1, has been adopted in the Senate without amendment. The duty is cast upon the Board, in view of the admitted congestion in the Goose Lake district, to take immediate action under it. There is no issue whatever which requires the taking of evidence or the consideration of any submissions as to the facts. In co-operation with the Grain Board, the Railway Board has had the question of the movement of grain up with the different railways from time to time.

The first complaint as to the situation in the Goose Lake district was made in October, and the matter was then taken up by the Board's Inspector with Messrs. Murphy and Brown, of the Canadian Northern, and, on Nov. 6, Mr. MacLeod, the General Manager, was telegraphed that at that time the elevators were already filled, if not to capacity, and his personal attention and distribution of cars was required. On Nov. 8, Mr. MacLeod wired that he expected to send in the next 24 hours 250 empty box cars to Goose Lake points; and on Nov. 9, he was advised that, while that supply would help the situation, from the information on hand it would take more than that to really catch up, and that particular attention should be given to the demands of the district, owing to the fact that storage capacity had been practically all taken up, leaving an immense amount of grain which at that time could neither be stored nor forwarded. On Nov. 15, the Board's Inspector advised that the Canadian Northern had supplied in the district in question from Nov. 8 to 13, inclusive, 204 cars, leaving, however, still a shortage in the district of 1,500 cars. The Board's Inspector continued to press for a larger delivery.

The Board sent its Chief Operating

Officer, Mr. Spencer, to the west, with instructions to see that everything was done that possibly could be done by the railways to facilitate the movement both of empty and of loaded cars. Early in January the line was blocked by snow, and the haulage of wheat practically stopped. As it became necessary for the Board to concentrate its whole energy in seeing that districts in the west, many of which were suffering from an acute shortage of coal, should be supplied with it at the earliest possible moment, considerable time was lost in connection with this matter. Weather conditions were very unfavorable, the extreme cold occasioning a scarcity of water along the whole line, and rendering it very difficult to get any proper service from locomotives. In addition to local difficulties, the situation was further complicated by embargoes, which largely obtained from time to time practically at all United States ports from which grain could be exported, and to a limited extent to movements to St. John, N.B. While in the West, Mr. Spencer took up with Mr. Warren, Assistant to the General Manager, C.N.R., the question of the amount of grain which the company had yet to handle. The figures given by Mr. Warden to Mr. Spencer applicable to the Goose Lake district, which includes not only the line from Saskatoon to Calgary, but also the Delisle-Elrose Branch, show that the company estimated that 13,000,000 bush. of wheat and 2,000,000 bush. of other grain remained still to be hauled from the district. Mr. Warren's estimate showed that the grand total of grain yet to be hauled by the Company amounted to 89,000,000 bush. In response to a wire as to the situation in this connection, General Manager MacLeod wired the Board on Feb. 15 that wheat shipments had been made since the estimate so as to reduce the amount of wheat still left in the district to 11,732,000 bush., and 1,945,000 bush. of other grain, or a total of 13,677,000 bush. of grain in the Goose Lake district requiring transportation.

I am of the opinion that the company did its best to move the crop during the past season. It gave the Goose Lake district every consideration that it could, bearing in mind the demands of other districts served by its system. It can do no better now, and it is doubtful if it can do as well. The company's estimate was confirmed by the Secretary of the Saskatoon Board of Trade, who, at the commencement of the movement, wrote drawing the Board's attention to the situation in the Goose Lake district, and who since advised that a conservative estimate of grain still to be hauled out of the district would amount to 60% of the crop. The Grain Commission's attitude is entirely to the same effect. Indeed its figures as to the grain available somewhat exceed the company's. The fact of congestion and danger of deterioration and loss of grain has also been endorsed by the Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan, and by a deputation of those interested in the district, headed by Mr. McColl, of Chinook, subsequently reinforced by the Minister of Agriculture for Alberta, and Mr. Buchanan, M.P.

No useful object can be served by an inquiry, resulting as it would in delays and defeating the object of the Bill. The company admits the situation. There can be, and is, no doubt as to it or its urgency.

An order should now go carrying into effect the recent legislation, and requiring the C.N.R. to forthwith place 1,200 grain cars in the Goose Lake district and 36 locomotives. These cars and locomotives must be retained in that district until further order, and be employed in carrying grain either to the terminal elevator at Saskatoon and there making deliveries, or to transfer tracks at Saskatoon, whereby connection is made between the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific lines. The order will also require the Grand Trunk Pacific, which has idle cars and locomotives in the west, to use all available cars and locomotives in taking grain from the Saskatoon elevator to eastern points. In so far as deliveries are made by the Canadian Northern into the elevator, there is no difficulty whatever in the company keeping those cars in the districts and immediately returning them. In so far as deliveries are made to transfer tracks, the Grand Trunk Pacific must, in return for each car transferred, supply the Canadian Northern an empty box car in lieu thereof, so that at least 1,200 grain cars will be at all times engaged in the movement. As already intimated, the movement will continue until further order. This order will not go until such time as the Grain Commission advises that there is no longer danger of loss of unstored and unprotected grain in the district, or until such time as the Saskatoon elevator has been filled and the Grand Trunk Pacific is unable to remove from the transfer tracks grain carried by the Canadian Northern from the district. The companies are required to agree as to the proportionals of the rate, which must not be increased. The proportionals should be such as will give the Canadian Northern an increase over the ordinary rate per mile which a pro rata on the through movement would yield over the Canadian Northern mileage into Saskatoon. These proportions are to be agreed to within a week; and, in the absence of agreements arrived at between the parties by that time, will be then settled by the Board on such advice and submissions as either Railway Company desires in the meantime to submit.

The Board of Railway Commissioners passed the following order, 24,784, Mar. 9: Upon its appearing to the Board that the Canadian Northern Ry. is unable in the ordinary course to move the quantity of grain awaiting transportation in the Goose Lake district with reasonable dispatch, within such time as will enable a large quantity of unstored grain to be moved before serious deterioration, it is ordered that, until further order, the Canadian Northern be directed forthwith to place and retain in service on its Goose Lake lines not less than 1,200 grain cars and 36 locomotives, to be used in transporting grain from the said district between Saskatoon and Calgary, either to the terminal elevator at Saskatoon for delivery thereto, or to the transfer tracks at Saskatoon for delivery to the Grand Trunk Pacific Ry. for furtherance east, as the said grain may be consigned in either case; and that with respect to deliveries so made to the said transfer tracks, the Grand Trunk Pacific, in return for each loaded car so transferred, supply the Canadian Northern with an empty grain car in lieu thereof, so that at least 1,200 grain cars shall at all times be engaged in the said service of transporta-