

RAILWAY RATES IN DAKOTA.

(Continued from page 1230.)

circumstances it costs at least \$6 per acre to raise wheat in North Dakota, and, to my personal knowledge, farmers in North Dakota have not been able to pay the interest on their debts, to say nothing of the principal, and, after harvesting and the returns were in, they have been forced to borrow money to defray their expenses through the winter. General Solicitor Grover, of the Great Northern, stated in reply, that the rates charged by the Great Northern, and the income secured therefrom, were not sufficient to defray the operating expenses of the road, and that without the incomes derived from the coal mines in Montana and the trans-continental line, the company could not be able to pay its operating expenses and the interest on its bonds. He denied that the farmers had a right to expect the railroads to share their loss when wheat was selling for only 45c, while they would not be willing to pay a larger rate when wheat was selling for 80c. General Manager Kondrick, of the Northern Pacific, followed very much in the same strain, concluding by stating that his road had reduced rates as much as it could, and that it had got to the end of its rope. A further reduction in rates on the Northern Pacific was impossible. Traffic Manager Martin, of the Soo, and General Freight Agent Moore, of the Milwaukee, presented the matter from the standpoint of their respective roads. Commissioners Boehler, Mills and Liggett, of the Minnesota board of railroad commissioners, and Ward Ames, of the Duluth board of trade, were also present. The conference was anything but satisfactory to the farmers who were present and participated in the discussion, and when the railroad representatives said they could not, and would not reduce the rates, their manner seemed to imply that they meant just what they said."

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The low price of binder twine this year is a matter for general satisfaction in Manitoba where it is a commodity of such importance to the farmers. The price this year, in comparison with the cost of twine a few years ago, will allow of quite a saving. The saving this year on twine, on the present estimates of crop areas, when compared with the high prices of a few years ago, would amount to over \$300,000 in Manitoba alone. The area requiring twine this year is say 1,500,000, which at 2½ pounds of twine to the acre would represent 3,750,000 pounds of twine required. Years past twine cost from 15 to 20c per pound. This year it has cost mostly from 8 to 9½c, or an average of say 9c per pound. There is a conflict of authority as to who should receive credit for the reduction. The Patrons claim it all, while others claim that it is due to the action of the Dominion government in reducing the duty and establishing a twine factory at Kingston. Perhaps all of these influences have done something toward reducing the price of twine, but the principal reason for the reduction is no doubt the natural outcome of commercial events. There has been a decline in the value of nearly all leading commercial commodities during recent years, and it would have been strange if binder twine had not shown similar conditions, quite aside from any special efforts made to reduce the price of the commodity.

At the recent meeting at Fargo, North Dakota, to discuss railway freight rates, it was claimed that grain rates in North Dakota and Minnesota were 2 to 3c higher than in Mani-

toba. The Commercial pointed this out in an article on wheat rates, which appeared in this journal on August 20. Compare, for instance, the rate of 22 cents per 100 pounds on grain from Langdon to Minneapolis, over the Great Northern, distance 412 miles, with the rate of 17 cents from Winnipeg to Fort William, distance 426 miles. A strong point made at the Fargo meeting was the declaration that the roads transport grain from Manitoba for 2 to 3 cents less per 100 pounds than the same roads charge in North Dakota. This probably has reference to the lines of the Northern Pacific in Manitoba.

The territorial legislature is offering a bonus for a machine for constructing fire guards. At present there is no machine which can be used for the cheap and speedy construction of fire guards, with the object of preventing the spread of prairie fires. It is thought that by offering a bonus, some mechanical genius will be induced to invent such a machine. Following are the conditions required: A machine which can be handled by not more than two men; that will, in passing over the ground once, create a fire guard at least eight feet in width, and cover not less than twenty miles per day; that any material consumed will not exceed a cost of \$4 per day.

The first legal labor day holiday in Canada, was duly celebrated on Sept. 3. At the last session of Parliament the day was made a legal holiday throughout Canada, and hereafter Labor Day will be one of the institutions of this country. The day was celebrated in Winnipeg with a procession and sports in the parks. The setting aside of one day in each year as a legal labor day holiday, is something of a recognition of the claims of labor. The celebration of the day will no doubt tend to strengthen the bond of union among the different labor organizations, as through it they will all be brought together on that day.

The Patrons' Twine.

The Editor, THE COMMERCIAL:

I notice in your issue of September 3, an article headed "The Patrons' Twine" which is unjust, unfair and untrue. You say that the Patrons' twine only measured 500 feet to the pound. Now sir, 5 different samples were measured by 5 disinterested parties, and went a trifle over 600 feet and one 535 feet, and the twine was guaranteed 600 feet to us and we gave the same guarantee, and up to date we have not one half dozen complaints; and you compare it with the Erison twine, called Maple Leaf. Now I ask in all fairness where would our farmers have been if they had been depending upon this twine, because you know and everybody knows that 50 per cent. or over of the crop was out before a bundle of this twine was in the country, and it is doubtful if it would have come then had not certain interested ones seen a chance to make a little political capital out of it. As to our twine being a lower grade than the Maple Leaf, Mr. Connor himself stated that the Patrons' Twine was fully 75 per cent. manilla.

Then you go on to state that this twine was sold in car lots at 8½c per pound. Mr. Wm. Johnston of Brandon showed me an invoice, where it cost him 9c per pound, and we can prove where twine was sold at 10, 11 and 12c per pound and some of it Maple Leaf too.

Then you make another untrue deduction, you say we paid 8½c while another paid 8½c,

now the truth is we asked for tenders for 500, 000 pounds of twine for this season. The tenders to be opened on June 7, we had offers in sealed envelopes as follows: McCormick, 600 feet, manilla, 9c delivered at provincial points; Plymouth twine, 600 feet, manilla, 8.81c duty and freight paid; Consumers Cordage Co., Blue Ribbon, 8c cast f. o. b. Montreal, with a freight rate running from 72c to \$1.11 per 100 pounds, and some of their agents which tendered asked from 9 to 9.45 for the same twine, while the Massey-Harris Co. sent a letter saying that they could not quote them but would have a full stock of American and Canadian twines and they would likely quote us in a few days. Northwestern Cordage Co., St. Paul, 8½c car lots provincial points, freight and duty paid. This was the twine we purchased and would have preferred dealing with a Canadian firm. But last year we could neither get the twine here on time neither could we get delivery of it without paying the cash before our was opened. The Northwest Cordage Co. gave delivery of the car on acceptance of draft at 10 days, a consideration that gave them the contract, considering our trouble of last year. Then you try to make out we paid \$9,000 more than we should have done, which is not true. The Patrons' twine was as good in quality and length as either the Maple Leaf or Blue Ribbon and we could not bring in 200 tons as you state, but only 170 tons. Then you speak about the margin taken by the exacting of ½c per pound while the dealers charge ½c, but you don't tell your readers that the car lot dealer takes this ½c and the retailer another ½c, while the Patrons' pay all local freights, pay all distributing charges and exchanges, etc. Out of the ½c, The Commercial, in fact, in a previous issue, I am informed that you stated that grave doubts existed whether this money did not go into the pockets of the handlers instead of the association's treasury. Now sir, we want you to understand, that you have no ground for such false statements and we defy you or any of those who hitherto large profits we have interfered to prove anything either against myself personally or against our order. Hoping you will see your way clear to do us justice, we ask for nothing more. Would you tell us the difference in raw material prices this year and five years ago. Farmers are paying nearly 50c less now. Has the raw material been reduced correspondingly? Why did not the Commercial in the interests of the consuming public publish the following facts at the time.

1890 f. o. b. cars Montreal freight paid to Provincial points, 14cots, price to the consumer 18, 19 and 20cots. 1891 Cordage Co., 12cots, consumer paid 15 and 16cots. 1892 Cordage Co., 11cots, consumer paid 14 and 15cots. 1893 Cordage Co., 10½cots, consumer paid from 11 to 13 cots, here is where the patrons come in.

Where, if you please, did their 3 to 5cots per lb go too. Answer and oblige,

Yours truly,

CHAS. BRAITHWAITE.

Portage la Prairie, Sept. 4.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The above letter does not require very much comment. The Commercial has been informed on good authority that the Patrons' twine does not run much over 500 feet to the pound, and we have also seen it stated in country papers that this is the case. As regards the price of the various twines, parcels sent by express all over the country have cost higher than regular prices. Mr. Braithwaite admits the correctness of our statement that the Patrons' twine cost 8½ cents net, that is, delivered free at Manitoba points. This is exactly ½ cent per pound more than other extra qualities of twine were offered at in car lots, delivered in Manitoba free of freight charges. There is no getting around this fact, and this is the main point The Commercial