

Mr. E. M. Fulton, of the Bass River Chair Factory, read a statement regarding the trade in chairs and other lines between Canada and the West Indies. The climate there, he said, necessitated the making of lightly constructed chairs with cane seats, and therefore calling for special machinery. The extra outlay, he felt, was not justified by the demand and the trade with the islands was decreasing. The transportation, he thought, was poor, and Canada was not on an equal footing with other countries. For Australia and South Africa, he said, fortnightly sailings would be all right, but with countries within a few days sail, a weekly service, he thought, should be established.

New York Has Better Service.

"The steamship service from United States ports is vastly superior to ours. If the total traffic will not at present warrant a weekly service, the great struggle should be to increase it. Transportation must be available before the traffic will come. It seems clear the market is extensive; taking all lines into consideration the supply ought to be abundant. Surely the transportation problem can be solved, as it has been solved, to the Old Country and the Pacific Coast."

Mr. Walter Mitchell, of Messrs. W. C. H. Mitchell, submitted a written report showing how the trade in grain and grain products could be increased. He argued that lower freight rates and better transportation facilities would assist Canada in securing more of the trade. The exports in flour for 1908 were 55,751 barrels. This being a small showing, when it was considered that between 500,000 and 700,000 barrels of flour were consumed. There also should be a larger trade in oats, he said, but last year the high price for the Canadian product gave the Dutch exporters an opportunity to secure some of the trade. The freight between Canada and the Indies was also higher than between Holland and the islands.

Bulk of Shipments Through New York.

In regard to peas, Mr. Mitchell said that Canada filled nearly all of the requirements in the West Indies, but the bulk of the shipments passed through New York. He thought that the Dominion should also supply more of the food-stuffs used. A preferential tariff would assist materially. The present steamship service to the Windward Islands and Demerara was an expensive one, as the ships called at too many unprofitable ports.

Mr. A. Handfield Whitman, managing director of the Robin Callas Company, spoke on the fish industry. He told the commission that the system of curing and preparing fish was not up to the standard which he and many others thought should exist. The Halifax Board of Trade, with the assistance of the other boards throughout the Province, had been endeavoring to secure the interest of the Federal Government in this matter, but without success. He believed that inspectors should be appointed and a standard package for shipments of fish should be instituted. He thought there was a market in the Indies for all grades of fish but he felt that when poor fish were sold as high-grade a drop in the trade would eventually come. The witness had no complaint to make regarding transportation.

Mr. J. Walter Allison, the next witness, stated that three-fifths of the cocoa he imported came from the West Indies, and he preferred the Trinidad product to any other. He found no difficulty with the transportation facilities, and was satisfied with the increasing trade.

Some Notes of Steamship Service.

The next witness was Mr. W. A. Black, of the shipping firm of Pickford and Black. On general principles he felt that a preference would increase trade. There was a strong feeling in the West Indies for some new arrangement. His firm had been in the West Indies service since 1888, and he was only now learning of any dissatisfaction with the service.

Lord Balfour then recapitulated some of the criticisms of the line they had heard in other places. One was that the headquarters of the Pickford and Black line being at Halifax goods shipped at St. John suffered owing to delay at Halifax.

The time had been exaggerated, Mr. Black replied, but all companies must have a home port where certain necessary repairs must be made to boilers and other parts of the ship. This would be some detriment to St. John in the case of some goods. There were many things to contend with when operating with extremely contrasted climates like Canada and the West Indies. The average delay at Halifax was eight days, according to schedule. It was impossible to diminish this safely and maintain sailing dates. Since the service had been opened the sailings had been increased, and ships of greater capacity used. He found now that sometimes the vessels came home with only one-third of their capacity used. Under preference he thought a weekly service would assist in the development of the traffic. Regarding the service from St. John direct he said that he would like to see it started, but from his knowledge of the exports and imports of that city he would not care to be the party operating the line. With reference to irregular sailings he confessed that on 23

occasions they had been held back one day or more by heavy snowstorms. Goods shipped to the Barbados via New York would reach their destination no sooner, he thought, than if sent over the line he represented.

What the Subsidy Provides.

The subsidy of \$134,000 which they received called for a twelve day service which they carried out. The eight day delay at Halifax was referred to and he stated that he did not think that it accounted for the smallness of St. John trade. The irregularity and expense of the cable service was a big advantage. He was sure that the trade could not be built up without a subsidy and a weekly service could not be inaugurated without additional subsidy.

Mr. R. E. Harris, K.C., one of the directors of the Acadia Sugar Refining Company, threw some light on the question of importing sugar from the West Indies. A combination existed in the West Indies in 1908 and early in 1909 for the purpose of putting up the price of sugar to the Canadian refiner. The effect of that combination was to compel the Canadian refiner to pay the producer the whole and sometimes more than the whole of the preference.

"I think it is safe to assume that the 'co-operation' which resulted so satisfactorily to the British West India planters would have been continued but for the legislation of 1909." It is clear that without the protection given by the act of 1909 (permitting the importation of 20 per cent. of their requirements from foreign sources at British preferential rates) the West India producer has it in power to kill the refining industry in Canada and think I have given sufficient reasons for the attitude the directors of the Acadia Sugar Refining Company have assumed at the present time when they say they are absolutely opposed to any trade arrangement with the West Indies, the price of which is the repeal of the privileges granted by the act of 1909. Questioned by Lord Balfour, Mr. Harris said the Canadian refiners paid the West Indian planters more than one-half of the preference ever since it came into force. He should not get more than he has received in the past, one-half. This would be a fair division.

Views of Montreal Millers.

The need of a direct steamship line and the question of preference were brought up at the sitting of the Royal Commission at Montreal. Mr. Anson, who represented the Ogilvie Flour Mills Company, pointed out that different milling companies were shipping flour to the West Indies through agents in New York on account of the excellent transportation facilities provided there. If a direct line were opened between Montreal and the Islands, he felt that these agents would locate in Canada when the current of trade turned. The present Canadian service, he said, was inadequate and flour often became tainted by the other articles that comprised the cargo. He also pointed out that the rates were higher than the New York lines. He was in favor of the preference.

The commission was informed by Mr. Robert Neilson, of the Lake of the Woods Milling Company, that his company already shipped direct to the Islands. The arrangements were made by cable, and the only troubles were high cable rates. Nine-tenths of the Lake of the Woods' shipments were made by St. John and Halifax, and the remainder by New York. The witness compared the Intercolonial with the C.P.R., and stated that the latter had an advantage over the former in that the shipper could always ascertain where his goods were. Mr. Fielding said that the Commission desired to have that disadvantage removed.

Mr. George Vipond, wholesale fruit dealer, represented the import trade. He did not favor the direct line referred to by the first witness, but believed that much of the fruit coming through New York at present could come into Canada by St. John. He showed, in the case of coconuts, how the preference had been a benefit, and thought that if it existed in many other branches of commerce the trade would be improved.

The testimony of Mr. W. H. D. Miller, of Miller and Stevens, Montreal, was worthy of consideration. He was closely examined and stated that it would be to the great advantage of the West Indies-Canadian trade were there to be established a steamship line from Montreal or Halifax to the West Indies, and owned by a Canadian railroad. Then all the railroad's agents would be canvassers for business for the steamship line, and a distributor of West Indies merchandise. Trade from and to interior Canadian cities would be facilitated by one line being held responsible for the entire transit from one port to the other. Dual responsibility would be obviated. Mr. Miller suggested that any abuse of monopoly could be prevented by the Dominion Railway Board. Such a line, he added, would give efficient service at a moderate cost and perhaps, after some years, without subsidy.

Several other witnesses were heard. The Commissioners were tendered banquets at the various cities, and will meet again early next year when the West Indies will be visited by them.