

Farmers' Case for the Railway Commission

The members of the new Railway Commission are not likely to have time hanging heavily on their hands for at least several months to come. Already the varied interests that have complaints to make of excessive and unfair freight rates, etc., are preparing their cases for presentation to the Commission. From statements already published manufacturers will have a pretty strong case to present against Canadian railways, and especially the Canadian Pacific, for discrimination in freight rates to the west in favor of their American competitors. For example, on agricultural implements the rate per cwt. from Toronto and Montreal to Canadian coast cities west is \$1.38, while the rate from New York, Boston and Baltimore over the C. P. R. to the same points west is only \$1.30 per cwt. The general rate on machinery is \$1.53 to the Canadian manufacturer and only \$1.45 to his American competitor. On farm wagons the rates are, respectively, \$1.38 and \$1.30. The discrimination is as high as 50 per cent. on many lines of wooden ware. For less than car lots the rate, in most cases, is still greater.

But what about the farmer? What kind of a case will he be able to present? We think it will be a pretty strong one, and one that will prove discrimination and unfair dealing on more than one count. The branch of agriculture that has suffered most, perhaps, at the hands of the railways is the fruit industry. Generally speaking the rates for carrying fruit are out of all proportion to the value of the product. As compared with flour the rate for apples is twice as high, and no better service is given for the latter than for the former. For instance, the through rate on flour from Ontario points to England is 38 cents per bbl., while on apples it is 89.8 per bbl., and flour weighs 200 lbs. to the barrel, while a barrel of apples only weighs 160 lbs.

But the high freight rate is not the most serious grievance fruit shippers have at the present time. Their greatest grievance, and it is the cause of serious loss to the shipper at all seasons of the year, is the long delay in the transit of shipments. Fruit is a perishable commodity, and if unduly delayed in transit results in serious and unnecessary loss to the shipper. Instead of shipments being hurried forward, they are often delayed for days at a time at some junction or distributing point, and reach their destination partially, if not wholly, unfit for use. When appealed to to remedy matters, the railways have neither done so, nor given any good reason for this unnecessary delay. If a prompt and efficient freight service were in use, fruit shipped from the Niagara or other fruit districts in the afternoon should get to its destination in any point of Ontario, east of Toronto, the following day. In England, goods shipped before 6 p.m. will reach a market 200 miles away before daylight the next morning. If they do not do so the shipper has a

good claim for damages against the railway which carried them.

It is freely stated by men in the trade, that the chief reason for delay in the carriage of fruit is that the railways, which practically own the express companies operating on their respective roads, in order to force fruit shippers to pay the higher express rates, make the freight service as unsatisfactory as possible. Whether this is the case or not we are not prepared to say. It seems strange, however, that fruit can be shipped over the Michigan Central Railway, which has no express company operating in Canada, from points in Niagara at 2 p.m. and it will arrive at points as far west as Petrolia by 10 a.m. of the following day, an evidence that railways can if they wish carry fruit expeditiously by freight. If all the fruit produced in Ontario, excepting, perhaps, the most perishable kinds, could be carried by freight instead of by express, it would mean many thousands of dollars in the pockets of the fruit grower. What the fruit men want in a freight service is refrigerator cars in summer, heated cars in the late fall and winter, quickness of service, a time limit for definite distances, and some means of compelling railways to report upon claims made within one month.

The grievances of other agricultural interests, while, perhaps, not so serious as those of the fruit men, are, nevertheless, serious enough to claim a good share of the time of the Commission. The cattle shipper has a number of complaints to make of unfair discrimination.

From Chicago to the seaboard the rate for cattle over Canadian roads is 28 cents per cwt., as against 23 cents from Toronto, a difference of only 5 cents, when the haul is over 500 miles greater. The rate from Sarnia or Windsor to the seaboard is 25 cents, as compared with 28 cents from Chicago. Then it is interesting to compare the rates from Buffalo and Toronto. From Buffalo to Boston it is 15 cents per cwt., while from Toronto to Boston the rate is 25 cents. The same rates rule as between these points and Portland, and it will be seen that Toronto is placed at a great disadvantage as compared with Buffalo in developing her export cattle trade. The difference in the rate between these points amounts to from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per head on all the cattle shipped out of Toronto, or a loss to the latter of fully \$100,000. Then there is the discrepancy in rates from St. Paul and Winnipeg to the seaboard over the Canadian Pacific. From the former point the rate is 40 cents per cwt., while from Winnipeg a rate of 60½ cents per cwt. is charged on all cattle shipments. The high rate for carrying cheese is another grievance. From Belleville to Montreal the rate on cheese is 20 cents per cwt., or from \$80 to \$90 per car, a pretty big tax for the service rendered. The rate by boat is only 10 cents per cwt. Likewise apples are carried by boat from Belle-

ville to Montreal for 25 cents per bbl. While navigation is open the railway makes the same rate, but as soon as the boats stop running up goes the rate on the railway to 29½ cents per cwt. for apples.

Such in brief is a little of what the Commission may expect to hear from the representatives of the various agricultural organizations, when the proper time comes. We believe they will make out a case so strong, backed up by such incontrovertible evidence, that their demands against the railways will as a mere matter of justice and fair play be granted.

Dollar Wheat

Dollar wheat has come, and the heart of the farmer is glad. But will it remain long? is a question that many a wheat grower would like to have answered to his satisfaction. Its stay will depend largely upon the prospect of other European countries, and especially Great Britain, being involved in the present war. From present prospects, such a contingency is not likely to arise, though one can never tell what the future may bring forth.

This advance in wheat which, strange to say, is confined to this continent, is largely a sentimental one. One sees the hand of the speculator in the game, and a doubt naturally arises as to the permanency of the advance. And it is worth noting that while prices in Britain have advanced somewhat, they have not kept pace with the march of values on this side. For the week ending February 13 not a bushel of wheat was shipped from New York, a most unusual occurrence at this season. A reason for this is not far to seek. Prices on this side are away above an export basis, and consequently shipping wheat to Europe is a losing game. And yet plenty of supplies are reaching European centres. Russia continues to export large quantities of wheat. For the week ending February 13 her exports increased to 2,296,000 bushels, which would seem to confirm our contention of two weeks ago that a war between Russia and Japan cannot affect the price of wheat very materially.

But whether the rapid advance of the past ten days has come through sentiment with the war feeling or otherwise, it is here, and we hope it will stay. Farmers generally are inclined to think it will stay, and that even higher values will obtain. Consequently they are not selling. This has created a local scarcity, and millers find it hard to get enough wheat to keep their mills running and their customers supplied. The price of flour has gone up at several points, and bread is on the up grade in one or two cities, all of which is "bringing grist to the farmers' mill," and we trust he will be able to profit thereby, by getting the full dollar and a little bit more for his wheat. Our advice is, watch things carefully, don't hold too long, for "now" may be the accepted time.