

TRANSPORTATION: OUR WATERWAYS.

TWO IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS ON THE SUBJECT BY MR. JAMES B. CAMPBELL, OF MONTREAL, WRITES A SPECIAL ARTICLE FOR THE MILLER. VIEWS OF MR. JAMES FISHER, M.P.P., OF WINNIPEG.

FEW more important questions of a commercial character are before our people to-day than a consideration of the best course to pursue in the development of our waterways. It may be expected that the coming international convention to consider the subject, and which is to meet in this city very shortly, will throw some light on the question. The fact that such a meeting has been called, and that leading citizens of Canada and the United States are interesting themselves actively in the matter, may be taken as good evidence that the question is a live one.

The MILLER has already published several contributions on the question, and this month further supplements these by an article specially written for these columns by Mr. James B. Campbell, of Montreal, in which the Welland Canal, as a factor in proposed plans, is discussed. And following Mr. Campbell's paper are the views of Mr. Fisher, M.P.P., of Winnipeg, who has been a close student of the subject for years.

WHAT MR. CAMPBELL SAYS.

It is with pleasure I notice that the CANADIAN MILLER invites discussion on the important problem of transportation in Canada. If by throwing your columns open to the question, you can lead Canadians on, either to criticize or to suggest improvements, the whole question of transportation is certain to be a gainer thereby.

The problem for us is, the transportation of the product of the great West to the consumers in Europe. There is no system of transportation by land which can compete in cheapness with the transportation by water, represented by a carrier of say 100,000 bushels in bulk down through the great lakes. The watershed of the United States drifting to the Gulf of Mexico has been of little use to the Americans of the Northern States, and they have bent all their energies to something else; a great development and a keen competition in their land carriage has led some people to imagine that the railway and not the watercourse was the true vehicle of transportation. In our country a glance at the map will convince anyone that a great development of business along our watercourse should be the aim of our business men and of our statesmen entrusted with power. Our watershed, clear and distinct from that of the United States, extends from the Rocky Mountains through our land to the Atlantic, and represents the artery of life for our country. It is true that this great artery is closed for 5 months in the year, but so is the whole transportation service of the great lakes, and the more the North West develops, the more evident it becomes that their future is dependent on this season of open water for its transportation. Far be it that I should depreciate in any way our railway system, more especially that portion of it west of Port Arthur, without which we could not have opened up that great empire in the west; however transportation by water east of Port Arthur is the portion of our watershed up for discussion at present.

These general remarks are preparatory to taking up the question to which this letter is devoted—the Welland Canal. The proposition to deepen the canals has become crystallized. Almost every writer and public speaker seeking to account for the stagnation of trade on the St. Lawrence route, seeking to account for the fact that Montreal tranships 25 millions against Buffalo's 200 millions, winds up with, "Deepen the canals." Competent engineers assent, I believe, that to deepen the Welland to a level of 20 feet, would mean an expenditure of 15 millions of dollars. The question is, Would it pay? Why is it so easy for grain to drift to the sea via Buffalo, and so difficult to bring it our way? In the answer will be found the answer to the question, "Would it pay?" The general modern tonnage of the upper lakes is now represented by vessels of 300 to 340 feet in length, and our Welland locks are only 270 feet; consequently for freights through to Kingston or Ogdensburg we are dependent on the smaller freighter and generally speaking the older boat. It is the larger vessels that make the freight rates, and as the older and smaller boats fall out, it is probable that it will become more and more

difficult to get capital to replace them. The season during which these lake craft can earn a dividend is short; freight rates are low, it is difficult to see what is to advance them, and their only salvation lies in the number of quick trips at the low price. The time for a propeller from Chicago to Port Colborne or Buffalo is about 4½ days. Our Welland has 20 locks, and a vessel making the trip in and out of Lake Ontario loses from 30 to 40 hours in that canal. A vessel owner will not voluntarily surrender that time, except at a compensating rate of freight, and the moment higher rates are established, the route is handicapped with the extra charge. This would apply with the same force were the locks 350 feet and their depth 20 feet. Towards the close of navigation, when the pressure of fall shipments is on, this loss of time in the Welland is a very serious consideration, and is a damper for the Canadian route. As an illustration take the rates of freights to-day wheat is being carried from Duluth to Buffalo for 1¼ a bushel and on to New York for 3 cents - 4¼ in all, while so light is the trade via the St. Lawrence, that it is difficult to get Welland canal vessels under 2½ cents to Kingston, tolls paid, and with the 2½ river freight, say 5 cents to Montreal. The largest carrier is the cheapest freighter; it will make the freight rates and take the trade with it. Until that far distant day arrives when Chicago elevators move out to the breakwater, capital investing in lake tonnage for general business will limit the draught of the vessel to the depth of water in the Chicago river; this river is narrow, its banks are muddy, and notwithstanding decrees at Washington, I doubt if it will ever stand dredging to 20 feet. If my memory does not deceive me, the depth at present is 15 6 and to call the last six inches water is to insult teetotallers. I have frequently seen the ordinary Buffalo propellers stuck in the sediment at the Clark street bridge. It is not the want of water in the Welland which sends the grain to Buffalo, for there is really very little difference between the Welland and the Chicago river. The reasons are, the shortness of the locks, the time lost in the canal, no return cargo, the limited amount of ocean tonnage at the Port of Montreal, sundry charges which should be borne by the nation, and the unlimited amount of ocean tonnage at the Port of New York. That is what is the matter with our trade.

Until we have a larger freight market at the Port of Montreal, there is not the slightest use in spending money on increasing the depth or lengthening the locks of the Welland. The only way in which we can increase this freight market is to buy more stuff where we hope to sell. The true solution, I think, for trade via the Welland is a transportation company, transhipping the grain at Port Colborne, into wooden barges and freighting it straight to Montreal. The vessel owner at Chicago, Duluth and Port Arthur would carry the grain to Port Colborne at Buffalo rates in competition, he would not figure on time lost in the canal; if we could not supply him with a return cargo, it would be no trick to run into Buffalo light, get his return cargo there, and travel west as happy as his rates of freight could make him. By this means we could make use of the United States west bound traffic to help our shipments via the St. Lawrence, until such time as we created a through trade of our own. Arranging our affairs to take advantage of the Buffalo coal trade would be a point gained for us, and western men equally with ourselves would reap whatever advantage there was in it, but so long as we depend upon the Welland canal only, we can never hope to do the business which our favorable position on this continent would seem to justify. The canal is, however, quite sufficient for the Montreal freight market at present. If we could not barge grain from Port Colborne to Montreal in 50,000 bushel lots cheaper than from Buffalo to New York via the little Erie in 6,000 bushel lots, there is no use in patting ourselves on the back over our natural water route. The demands of marine insurance, that such lake vessels carry sails, could easily be covered on 50,000 bushel barges, and the tow come on to Montreal. Do not let us hear anything about more elevators at Port Colborne. Put the price of the elevators into barges, we want the stuff to come through not stop there. At Buffalo the little floating elevators forced the big land elevators to buy them out. Cheap floating elevators will beat land elevators out of the transfer

trade. Such a transportation company would, however, have to be one of large capital. At Port Colborne the propellers would come into harbour from Chicago, Duluth and Port Arthur, with 100,000 bushel lots, and would have to be unloaded promptly, with the present depth of our river canals and channel, and at the rate they are giving this much talked of deepening of that important part of our route to 14 feet, will see two elections and ten years time pass over our heads. The grain would have to be transferred into 4 or 5 barges, these barges would have to be camped out for at least a fortnight, and others ready to take their places. The season is short in which to make a dividend, and with our little bit of a freight market at Montreal, a Welland and Montreal transportation company would not make expenses. To do the thing right it must be prepared to handle the western trade on a western basis, and there is not the tonnage at the Port of Montreal to do it. With more freight room, and 14 feet of water in our river channel and canals, barges freighting 50 to 60 thousand bushels, Port Colborne to Montreal, preserving the identity of the grain, especially the fine spring wheat of the north, would leave New York with its larger freightage and little 6,000 bushel boat loads high and dry at competing prices for the spring wheat trade, but a larger freight market at Montreal is an absolute necessity. As to what could be done in the way of increasing our ocean freight market, it is only necessary to quote a well known axiom: "Those who can reach the markets of the world cheapest, shall control the markets of the world"—and it applies with the same force to imports that it does to exports.

The general conclusion is, that until there is trade enough to push a transportation company on the Welland-Montreal route, to the full capacity of that canal, it would be very little benefit to the country enlarging it. When that day comes it might pay better to build another, for there would not only be room for two, but for many other transportation routes through Ontario. Mr. Hill, President of the Northern Pacific Railroad, said, Canada has advantages which are peculiarly her own, and that there was room for a far greater development of trade than most people imagined.

At the moment of that earthquake last spring in this city, I was talking to the owner of these fine English turret freighters which are now doing such good work on the St. Lawrence for our coal companies. It is quite possible to build a "turret" freighter for a 14 foot draught of water capable of carrying 90,000 bushels of grain through from the lake ports to England—but all the canal locks would have to be lengthened.

Regarding this business of loading at the lake ports; cheap craft of say 3000 tons represented by those "turrets" might possibly do it, but they would have to compete with the 12 or 14 thousand tonners of the ocean loading at an ocean port; the cheap craft of the lakes with a tow of barges would more than hold their own, while the turning of the grain ocean would be a decided advantage to the grain, and with regard to corn almost a necessity. The time lost in those numerous canal locks would prevent as expensive a ship as a 20 foot ocean freighter loading at a lake port in competition with cheaper tonnage. The "whaleback", suitable for the lakes is a failure on the ocean; the "turret" is still experimental for the sea and lakes, but it has established itself on our river to stay. I learn from an independent quarter that they are paying 10% on their cost—notwithstanding dull times. Let us have the 14 foot channel as quickly as possible.

A VOICE FROM MANITOBA.

Mr. James Fisher, M. P. P., of Winnipeg, Man., when in Toronto a fortnight ago, gave expression at some length to his views on the subject of transportation and the benefits that he believes would accrue to Canada, and particularly the Northwest, by an extension of our waterways.

"The people of Manitoba," said Mr. Fisher, "are becoming more and more alive to the great importance of the deepening the channels. I believe the opinion is every day gaining ground that the surest means of deliverance from the present ruinous freight rates is to be found in the deepening of these waterways."

"What we are specially anxious for at present is to