

GEORGIAN BAY CANAL

It Offers Best Solution of Transportation Problem, Says Port Arthur Man

That a Georgian Bay Canal offers the only national, economic and patriotic solution of our transportation problem is the opinion of Mr. Joseph Redden, vice-president of the Port Arthur, Ont., board of trade, in a lengthy statement on the subject just issued. He points out that the returns recently published by the grain commissioners of Canada of the amount of grain handled at our great inland lake ports of Port Arthur and Fort William for the crop year period ended August 31st, 1916, indicate to what large proportions the flow of grain through these ports has reached. The report shows that approximately 370,000,000 bushels of wheat, oats, barley and flax were shipped, 40,000,000 bushels by the all-rail routes and 330,000,000 bushels by vessel. "But although the total figures are very gratifying, and illustrate the wonderful development of Canada's western provinces," says Mr. Redden, "there are features in the report which are far from gratifying, and which cause great disappointment and uneasiness as to the future of Canada's transportation interests to all who have the interests of Canada at heart.

Through United States Channels.

"It shows that, while able to produce this great volume of grain that sought its exit through the terminals of Port Arthur and Fort William, Canada lost the control of its transportation to the seaboard after leaving these ports, for out of the 330,000,000 bushels shipped by vessel 193,000,000 bushels, practically 60 per cent., were carried to United States lake ports, thence by United States railroads to United States seaports.

"Of this vast amount sent to United States lake ports, 21,000,000 bushels were carried by Canadian vessels, showing that it was not on account of an inadequacy of Canadian vessels that prevented more of the grain being sent to Canadian ports, but that the present Canadian route to the sea is outclassed by the United States route."

Mr. Redden then asserts that Toronto and the other cities on Lake Ontario were fully aware of the inferiority of the Welland-St. Lawrence route, "but were willing to jeopardize Canada's prosperity in her shipping and transportation interests for a highly improbable local aggrandisement." He adds that Canada gives to the United States, free of cost, the key to our water transportation system, and that we have at present no permanent coasting trade for our vessels.

Montreal and Buffalo.

"The development of the Georgian Bay Canal," says Mr. Redden, "places Montreal in direct competition with Buffalo, making possible from the Canadian head of the Great Lakes a water route of 934 miles to Montreal, against the approximately 850 miles to Buffalo, with direct connections in Montreal during the summer with ocean shipping, and with a rail haul to Atlantic seaports for winter delivery for storage grain equal or less than that from Buffalo."

The statement concludes: "The solution of the freight problem of the west will not be the Panama Canal, of which so much is expected by some, but of which route Mr. Lanigan, traffic manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in an examination before the railway board at Ottawa four years ago, said: 'If it (the grain) was carried free to Vancouver for export, it would not result in a trade being developed under present conditions, owing to the high cost of sea carriage and insurance.'

"There are other factors in the handling of grain that will be against the routing of grain to Europe via the Panama route which are not necessary to enumerate, Mr. Lanigan's evidence being all-sufficient.

Hudson Bay Route.

"The Hudson Bay route also will, in the minds of many who are thoroughly conversant with the grain trade in its many phases of handling, be always handicapped by the climatic conditions existing on that route, conditions which will prevent the certainty of delivery in Europe of grain shipped from the west in all but a few months in each year. There are some who talk of all-the-year navigation by the Hudson Bay route, but those who know the hardships and dangers of December navigation on Lake Superior realize that winter navi-

gation on the Hudson Bay route, the channels leading to which are over 1,000 miles further north than the Great Lakes, is a dream.

"The great solution of the western freight problem will be simply adequate rail connections with the twin ports, Port Arthur and Fort William, on Lake Superior; to all intents and purposes, the final market to the western farmer for the selling of his grain, there to connect with a deep waterway, practically an ocean highway, which, for nearly eight months of each year will carry cheaply the millions of tons of European-bound freight of western Canada and the United States.

Is Only Remedy.

"Is it not, therefore, imperative for the government of Canada to be up and doing, securing the world's best advice as to which route should be developed and not go on blindly in the greater development of the Welland-St. Lawrence route, a route that is equal to and developed sufficiently for all local demands and requirements, but which has proven in its long years of existence a dismal failure in the holding to Canada of the handling of the European-bound freight of the Great Lakes, and the further development of which, in the minds of many, including the vast majority of the commanders of Canadian upper lakes vessels, is a frightful blunder, they fully believing that the development of the Georgian Bay Canal is the one and only remedy to regain our trade, now fast disappearing through United States channels, to develop our shipping and industrial life, to develop our mineral resources, making possible to central Canada supplies of coal from Canadian mines brought through Canadian channels; not allowing that great section of Canada to be at the mercy for her coal supply on United States interests, supplies which may be and can be stopped at any moment through industrial or political strife in the United States.

"Is the ocean-bound commerce of western Canada to be handled for all time by Canadian or United States interests? That is the great question, and it will be answered by the development of one or the other of the two great canal routes from the head of the Great Lakes to the sea. So let the government of Canada be guided in the choosing of the route to be developed, not from the necessity of political expediency or sectional pressure, but only on national grounds, and on the advice of the world's best experts on transportation, for tremendous issues are at stake.

National Transcontinental Railway.

"Another transportation problem that deserves attention and the closest scrutiny by the government of Canada is that peculiar feature in the National Transcontinental Railway, brought about by that road only having connections by a spur from its main line with the Great Lakes ports of Fort William and Port Arthur, which necessitates all grain or other freight when shipped east from the Grand Trunk terminals at the head of the Great Lakes having to be sent back approximately one-third of the distance to Winnipeg before striking the main line and starting on its eastward route, on which it will have to travel an equal distance before getting abreast of the Great Lakes ports from which it was consigned. This feature in the connections of the Transcontinental with the Great Lakes ports is practically prohibitory against any great storage of grain at the terminal there, the real market, to all intents and purposes, of the western farmer. With a rise in price in the grain markets of the east or Europe during the winter months, making it profitable to sell, the grain dealer or farmer is just as well off if he had never moved his grain out of the west, for, on account of the routing necessary for grain to take when routed east for winter delivery to the seaboard from the great storage terminals at the head of the Great Lakes, Winnipeg is almost just as near the eastern seaports as the lake ports, although actually over 400 miles further away. The management of the Transcontinental Railway, under such conditions, are undoubtedly not sympathetic to the making of Fort William a storage port, as it necessitates a long, profitless haul for any storage grain ordered to the seaboard during the winter months.

"This may account, no doubt, for the small amount of storage space for grain that is in existence on the terminals of the Transcontinental at Fort William, 6,500,000 bushels against the approximately 40,000,000 bushels on the terminals of the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian Northern Railway.

"The remedy to this great drawback to the greater efficiency of the government road and to the betterment of the service of that railway to the twin ports is for the government to have immediately built the connecting link which is