

THE FARMING WORLD

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Eastern Agency of The New West Farmer

Our Eastern Gateways

WHILE Ontario and Western Canada have not shown much interest in the development of the Maritime Provinces, and apparently now are not very much concerned whether Canadian export and import business is done through Canadian ports or through those of a foreign country, this question is one of great importance in the Eastern Provinces.

An unfortunate rivalry has existed for some years between St. John and Halifax that has been of distinct disadvantage to both ports, and under the conditions that have existed during the past winter, business has been driven away from the Canadian route. The conditions were these: A few years ago the Government made a mail contract with the company controlling the Allan Line steamers whereby the mails should be landed by the St. Lawrence route in the summer and at Halifax in the winter, the contract providing that in the winter the steamers should also go to St. John to get freight. This latter provision was made because sufficient freight could not be got to load the steamers at Halifax and to compel them to come to St. John, where they had always previously gone for Canadian cargo.

Shortly after this the Canadian Pacific Railway Co., which by its purchase of fourteen of the Elder-Dempster steamships had become an ocean carrier, placed on the Liverpool-Canadian route their magnificent Empress steamships and the Allans sublet their mail contract to the Empress boats. The mails would once each fortnight carry the mails and on the alternate weeks the Allans would carry them on their new turbine ships.

St. John being the terminus of the C.P.R., that company, of course, brought all its vessels to that port, and the proposition was made to the Government that it should allow an alteration in the mail contract so that the Empress steamers could come direct to St. John and save the delay and danger of a call at Halifax, a call only serving the sentimental purpose of landing the mails. As an offset for the benefit of Halifax, it was proposed that the Empress turbines should come only to Halifax, and the C.P.R. was willing to do all it could to assist in furnishing sufficient cargo so that the turbines might obtain full loads there.

This proposed arrangement was not, however, satisfactory to either Halifax or St. John. The former would not admit there was any other port in Canada where mails could be landed in the winter season, and St. John was averse to losing the business incidental to the loading of the Allan turbines.

It is only fair to St. John, however, to say that there was a strong feeling that if the Empresses were allowed to come direct to St. John that they would be willing to waive the freight business which would go to the turbine boats. Halifax, however, could not be pacified. Its people would not for one moment consent that St. John should be admitted to an equality in the mail business, and backed by a solid representation from Nova Scotia supporting the Government its position was so strong that the C.P.R. was forced to allow the Empress boats to pass by Halifax with the mails.

Now we come to the point where the C.P.R., finding the contract could not be re-arranged to permit their mail boats to come direct to St. John, made propositions whereby they should be able to continue their train service to St. John and permit their boats to make their terminus there. This plan has not, perhaps, been stated in so many words, but it was undoubtedly the underlying motive which led up to the suggestion that the C.P.R. has been conducting with reference to the rights that company apparently wants upon Intercolonial rails and for the conducting of local business in Intercolonial territory. The forces in favor of giving the C.P.R. the rights it would like to have in that connection are the influence of the people of Halifax, and, more or less, all the people of Nova Scotia, while the people of St. John and the western part of New Brunswick are strongly opposed, maintaining that as St. John is the best available Canadian winter port with the shortest rail haul, and having spent some million and a half dollars of its own money upon docks and harbor improvements, the interest upon which is largely met by taxes upon the citizens, it should receive the benefit of its position and expenditure and continue to be, as it now is, the real terminus of the Canadian Pacific.

The impartial observer cannot fail to sympathize with both cities in their laudable efforts to secure business. With the growth of Canadian trade and the projection of transcontinental railways other than the C.P.R., both ports will, if the traffic is confined to Canadian channels, have all the business

they can do; but herein lies the rub and the feeling of unrest which pervades the people. No one doubts that the intention of the Canadian Pacific is to build up Canadian business through Canadian ports, while only a few doubt but that the traffic of the Grand Trunk Railway will continue to go to Portland, Me., or that the Grand Trunk Pacific traffic will be diverted to its parent line and its freight also find an outlet at a foreign port. The whole evidence points in that direction. The Government refused to build the G.T.P. down to the nearest Canadian ports. The road is not allowed to seek the nearest ports, but is carried through the timber reserves of New Brunswick, over excessive grades, where it cannot reach a New Brunswick port except at such distance as puts these ports entirely out of the running in competition with Portland, Maine.

Taking all these things into consideration, the people of New Brunswick feel that the C.P.R. company should not find it necessary to go to Halifax, but should have the right to bring their steamers direct to St. John and utilize that port which the people of New Brunswick believe to be the best port at present available to compete successfully with United States ports for western exports and imports.

The C.P.R., for its part, as a business corporation, has shown that it wishes to adopt those methods which will enable its steamships and its road to successfully compete with steamships and railways using U.S. ports. It claims that it cannot hope to compete successfully if its steamers are compelled to stop at both Halifax and St. John.

The company takes the ground that if its mail boats cannot come to St. John, but must call at Halifax, then these boats should make their terminus at Halifax, and that its trains should be allowed the use of the Intercolonial rails to meet their steamers, and that in consideration of the extra expense of this long rail haul they should have the right to solicit local business along the line of the I.C.R.

Thus the situation rests, and it is unfortunate that the conditions should make such keen rivals of Halifax and St. John, for they should be unitedly striving to get for Canadian ports the Canadian trade, instead of harassing each other by insisting upon the carrying out of that dual port contract.

The suggestion the C.P.R. originally made, that the Allan mail steamers might make their terminus at St. John, and that the C.P.R. mail steamers come direct to St. John, would seem to be greatly in the interest of both ports and of the whole of Canada. The present service is a monument to the folly of both ports and of great damage to them in their competition with United States routes. There should undoubtedly be direct sailings to each port, and if the C.P.R. cannot have its mail steamers come direct to its terminus at St. John, then in all fairness to that company it should have the facilities for reaching its steamers at Halifax. Halifax and Nova Scotia want to see this arrangement carried out. St. John and western New Brunswick want to see the C.P.R. service confined to St. John. The danger may be that out of the quarrel may grow the diversion of the C.P.R. freight traffic to a port in Maine, where it can make considerable business done by the Grand Trunk through Portland. It might here be stated that the C.P.R. is reported to already own the railway which connects the main line with the Port of Washington, on a splendid harbor, and some 150 miles nearer Montreal than is the port of St. John. H. W.

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