

FARMER'S ADVOCATE

AND HOME MAGAZINE

* AGRICULTURE, STOCK, DAIRY, POULTRY, HORTICULTURE, VETERINARY, HOME CIRCLE.*

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VOL. XXXVI.

LONDON, ONT., AND WINNIPEG, MAN., JANUARY 1, 1901.

No. 517

EDITORIAL.

The Farmer and the Railway.

The revival of the proposal to establish in Canada a railway commission to stand between the shipper and the transportation companies once more brings into the arena of public discussion the question of rates, transportation facilities, and the respective rights of individuals and corporations. The three producers who have felt, perhaps, most seriously and directly the tax of transportation charges upon their industry have been the cattle feeder, the fruit-grower, and the Western wheat-grower. Once the charges become sufficiently onerous to hamper the progress of these industries, then transportation becomes a menace to the well-being of the country, and a source of discontent.

One of the foremost railway men in America, Mr. Paul Morton, who has charge of the entire freight and passenger traffic of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, the third largest in the world, having some 800 miles of track, and employing over 30,000 hands, states in the N. Y. *Independent* that one fifth of all the wealth in the United States is invested in railway securities, and the people owning them should be protected from unrestrained and destructive competition. To do that, and protect the small shipper, he favors legalized pooling under the Interstate Commerce Commission rather than further concentration of ownership, or government ownership or control. But if the owners of securities are to be safeguarded, what about the people? From governments and municipalities, millions of dollars in bonuses, millions of acres of public lands and various other privileges have gone to establish railways, so that we should say the people have a vested interest in these roads. Having very largely helped to build the roads, and then paying for the service the roads render, they should certainly have it upon equitable terms. They are common carries, and Mr. Morton himself admits that all shippers and travellers should be treated alike, just as they are in the purchase of postage stamps or in the payment of customs duties or inland revenues. The FARMER'S ADVOCATE believes that to be sound doctrine, and were it enforced the small shippers would not be crowded to the wall and all would get a fairer return for their products.

Within the past fortnight two organizations have placed upon record their convictions upon the subject—one the Fruit Growers' Association of the Province of Ontario, meeting in Brantford, and the other the large representative gathering of farmers and stockmen assembled at Guelph during the week of the Ontario Winter Fair.

The Fruit Growers resolved, on motion of Mr. D. J. McKinnon, of Grimsby,—

"That, in the opinion of this association, the time has arrived when a railway commission, appointed by the Dominion Government, should be given full power to regulate freight and passenger rates upon an equitable basis."

In support of the foregoing, Mr. A. McNeil, of Windsor, contended that the Ontario grower was being discriminated against, to the advantage of his United States competitor. A basket of grapes, that sold in Ontario for 11 cents, had to be sold in Brandon for 50 cents, because of the freight rates. It cost \$100 to send a carload of grapes to Winnipeg in cars that otherwise would go empty, and it cost \$50 to bring a carload of other produce of no greater value from Winnipeg down here. Instancing the discrimination against them as Canadians, he said an Eastern Ontario canner could buy peaches in Grand Rapids, Mich., and get so much cheaper freight rates than from Essex County as nearly to make up the duty. Freight on apples from Ontario to Liverpool was from 85 cents to \$1.25, and from the United States as far west as the Mississippi from 56 cents to 80 cents. He knew also, he said, that this discrimination was retarding the live-

stock industry in the same way. Corn which the stockman required for feeding could be shipped from Detroit to Quebec for 11 cents, and from Essex County the rate was 18 cents. For the same reason American corn could be laid down at less cost throughout Western Ontario than could Essex County corn.

The Winter Fair meeting at Guelph adopted the following resolution:—

"That this convention of Ontario farmers, representing every county from Essex to Glengarry, is of opinion that the Dominion Government should take immediate action for the purpose of placing Canadian farmers in at least as good a position as their American rivals in the matter of transporting their products of the farm to the European market; and that, to this end, we believe power should be obtained at the forthcoming session of the Dominion Parliament for the appointment of a commission which shall have full power to regulate and control freight rates on Canadian railways and the allotment of space and charges for the same in ships sailing from Canadian ports; and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Dominion Government."

When the freight and other charges on a fat steer from a Western Ontario point to Liverpool amounts to between \$20 and \$30, it becomes a very serious deduction from the returns of the feeder. Mr. Thos. Crawford, M. P. P., who has had an extended experience in the cattle trade, pointed out at the Guelph meeting that a car of cattle from Listowel, in Western Ontario, costs from \$10 to \$20 more in freight to Boston, Mass., than a car from Chicago; while from Toronto, the freight to Portland, Me.; Boston, Mass., or St. John, N. B., equals Chicago rate, the shipper in the latter having also the advantage of rebates. During the past summer it cost at times \$5 to \$8 per head more to ship from Canadian ports to England than from American ports. Herein we find one of the reasons why the beef cattle industry in Ontario in recent years has been decadent and the character of our beeves deteriorating. Farmers concluded that it did not pay them as well as dairying, consequently the use of good beef-type bulls was discontinued, and their places filled by dairy sires; too many immature bulls were used, and in many cases the wretched scrub male animal held sway. It was a long step in the direction of reviving the industry when the Canadian Government put the feeders' raw material—corn—on the free list, but the disability of excessive freight rates still holds the Ontario farmer at a serious disadvantage, compared with the States feeders, who have been able to buy our stockers in thousands, feed them on their cheap corn, and enjoy the advantage of lower and probably better transportation for the finished product.

That there is ample room for a strong railway commission is quite evident from the foregoing considerations. But when the charter rights and the increasing power of these vast concentrated transportation companies are considered, it can readily be seen that a commission will have an arduous task before it, and everything desired will probably not be achieved, which we believe has been the case with the U. S. Interstate Commerce Commission and the commissions appointed in various individual States. But the agitation for redress must be kept up, and the independent railway commission, of which the *Toronto Globe* is the foremost exponent, would seem to be a more likely instrument than the present inefficient Railway Committee of the Dominion Privy Council. One thing the FARMER'S ADVOCATE would insist upon, and that is that one or more of its members be men qualified specially to represent the stockmen and farmers of the country, who are primarily and vitally concerned in the equitable adjustment of transportation questions. Corporations are popularly supposed to have no souls, and however that may be, the executive officers of these organizations are only human, and are more or less engaged in looking

out for themselves by efficiently managing the properties with which they are entrusted, in order to earn dividends for the shareholders. We may therefore assume that they will, in the matter of rates, impose all that the traffic will stand, and if the ruinous competition of a rate war has cut down receipts, there will be an effort to recoup by levying on the traffic from non-competing points, or upon the small shippers. A properly-constituted commission, invested with full powers, should be able to redress many grievances and secure the producer a better return for his labor and investment. The experience of the present Canadian Government in exacting more favorable Western freight rates from the C. P. R., in letting the Crow's Nest Pass R. R. contract, shows the imperative need for force in these matters, and the advantage of having some efficient lever to apply. Consequently it seems to us that the Canadian people should retain and probably extend further westward the connections of the Intercolonial Railway which now unites Montreal and the seaboard. Have we any reason to hope for good from a railway commission? The success of organized effort on the part of the breeders of pure-bred stock in Ontario to obtain better facilities and more favorable rates for the transportation of animals required in different parts of Canada for breeding purposes proves what can be done. In this direction, and in promoting public exhibitions, these associations have demonstrated their usefulness, and in these two directions their efforts will be continued; but if we read aright the signs of the times, the great battle of the future will relate to the efficient and reasonable transportation of animals and food products, and in the conflict—if the term be not too strong—these organizations can prove a valuable ally of a railway commission in conserving the agricultural interests of the country.

Lessons from the Winter Fairs.

The undeniable success attending the live-stock shows held last month at Chicago and Guelph goes to show that, as an educational institution for farmers and dairymen's sons, the winter fair, well managed, may be made a potent power for good in demonstrating the advantage which good breeding brings to the feeder of meat-producing animals. It also affords useful and helpful lessons on methods and means of feeding economically and to good purpose. Millions of money is now wasted in unintelligent and random feeding, feeding irregularly, allowing animals at some periods of their life to run down in condition, requiring double expense to bring them back to their former state of thrift; feeding concentrated foods of high money value, the tendency of which when fed alone or in improper combinations is to produce cheap-selling products; feeding past the point where the most profitable gains are made and the best quality of meat put on. These are all points which, especially when a well-directed slaughter test is associated, are brought clearly before the people and afford useful practical lessons by which all may profit. But the slaughter test will never do its best work until the rules require and the amount of the prize money offered justifies the killing of the prize-winners, so that comparison of the living animal with the dressed carcass of the same may be made. This, we admit, may be too much to expect in the case of young animals which their owners may be desirous of carrying over to compete in an older class the following year, but there is no good reason why the winners that have reached the age limit should not prove their claim to their honors by dying well—if it be in them to do so. By the ruling of the management of the Guelph Show (for what reason is not revealed) there was no inducement to kill the best animals in the cattle classes, since the grades, in which the grand champion was found in life, as is usually the case, were not allowed in the