

2 Millbank House,
Westminster. S.
9th January, 1917.

Sir,

BETTER UTILISATION OF CANALS.

On the invitation of the Director of Munitions Railway Transport Representatives of various Canal Companies and Canal Carriers attended a meeting with him to consider whether it is possible to utilise the Canals of this Country to a greater extent than at present for the conveyance of materials of a non-urgent character in order to relieve the pressure upon the Railways and at that Meeting a Committee representing the Canal Companies and Canal Carriers undermentioned was appointed to obtain information and report to the Ministry of Munitions.

The Committee so appointed, have since consulted together and beg to submit herewith general information respecting the working by the various undertaking which they consider should be placed before the Ministry of Munitions, together with suggestions as to the best means which in their opinion are most likely to secure the Canals and Inland Waterways of the Country being more fully made use of than hitherto during the War.

In presenting this Report the Representatives have specified under separate heads the position of the Canal Owners who are also Canal Carriers as Canal Owners only & as Canal Carriers or Bye-traders.

In addition to this as shewing the importance of the interests involved there is appended a return shewing the mileage; Capital; Freight, & Toll tonnage for the year 1905 the latest figures published in the Government Blue books, of only those Canal Owners (but excluding the Canal Carriers) who were represented at the Meeting referred to in the foregoing paragraphs.

The opinion of the Committee of the Canal Owners and Canal Carriers is, that the most effective means, in fact the only satisfactory course to adopt, to ensure the Canals and Inland Waterways being utilised to the fullest extent, is for the Government to:-

- (a). Keep the present depleted staffs of the various interests concerned without further withdrawals for Military service.
- (b). Pay the War Bonus as demanded by the Canal men in the same way as the Railway men are paid.
- (c). Replace on the Canals traffic which since the War has been diverted to Rails.
- (d). Provide additional men for working such traffic.
- (e). Guarantee to the Canal Shareholders the nett Revenue on the basis of the year (1913) preceding the War as in the case of the Railways.

As regards female labour on the Canals, the Committee desire to add the following observations:-

Women are employed where possible in assisting their husbands or Fathers in working Narrow Boats over Narrow Canals, & over Broad Canals which have only few locks - Where there are children in the family these cases are now less than in former years, the Boatmen who are skilled men having to keep a home ashore to comply with the Education & Canal Boats Acts.

The navigation of Broad Canals with numerous locks of greater dimensions than those on the Narrow Canals, & over tidal rivers, requires skilled men accustomed to encountering sudden storms & gales which frequently arise on Rivers one mile or more in width. Some Canals have on an average 3 locks in every mile of the entire distance and it is a physical impossibility for Women either alone or with the aid of one man to work a Broad boat with 50 to 60 tons on board through such a system. The work is too laborious altogether unsafe as regards Tidal services.

Women are not suitable for the work of Warehouse Porters.

We are, Sir, your obedient Servants,

(Signed) W. A. McGrath, Chairman.

Geoffrey G. Hawkins, Secretary.

Signed on behalf and by the authority of the Committee which consisted of representatives of the following:-

Aire & Calder Navigation.; Birmingham Canal Company.; Grand Junction Canal Company.; Leeds & Liverpool Canal Company. Rochdale Canal Company.; Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal Company and Severn & Canal Carrying Company Limited.; Anderson Company Ltd.; W. Bleasdale & Co. Ltd.; Thomas Clayton (Oldbury Ltd.); Fellows Morton & Clayton Ltd.; Mersey Weaver Carrying Co. Ltd.

To: The Right Hon'ble. Christopher Addison, MP

Ministry of Munitions.

Whitehall Place,

London. SW.

AS CANAL OWNERS WHO ARE ALSO CANAL CARRIERS.

Serve as Carriers between the Chief Industrial centres in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Midlands & the principal Ports in the Country.

Active competitors of the Railways; and carry large quantities of Munitions, Foodstuffs, Provisions, Oil, Wool, Cotton, Coal, Cloth, & other Goods under Government Contracts.

Large number of Mills, Works, &c. situate alongside Canals, many of which were specially created to ensure transit of their commodities by Canal.

Conveyance rates subject to Statutory Maxima hitherto operative below competitive Railway Rates.

When because of the increased cost of living owing to the War, the Railway Companies granted War Bonuses to their Staff (the greater portion of which in borne by the Government, not only as regards men employed on the Railways but also the Canal Employees of the Railway Companies) the Canal Companies' Staffs under threats of Strike demanded similar payments, and large concessions in respect of War Bonus had to be made to them, which the Companies understand will never be withdrawn, but become permanent increased wages.

The increased price of Materials, labour, and working expences generally, combined with the extra wages in the name of "War Bonus", compelled some of the Canal Carrying Companies to increase their Conveyance Rates equal to, and in some instances higher than the competitive Railway rates.

The Railway Companies, however; have not increased their conveyance rates, because the Government in addition to bearing the greater portion of their War Bonus, also guaranteed to the Railway Companies the equivalent to their net revenue for the year 1913.

Ever since August 1914 the Canal Companies have had a large proportion of their Fleet idle in consequence of many of their men joining the Military Forces or leaving to obtain more remunerative work elsewhere thereby rendering the Companies unable to carry large quantities of traffic for their regular Customers.

In consequence of this and of an effort made by increasing the Canal Conveyance Rates to meet to some extent the increased working expences and War Bonus payments, which are out of all proportion to their earnings, the Traders have diverted traffic from the Canals to the

Serious loss has thus been incurred by Canal Companies, but the Government have benefited thereby, as such transfer of Earnings from the Canal Companies to the Railway Companies, reduced the amount payable by the Government under their guarantee to the Railway Companies. Further demands are now in hand by Canal Companies for increased War Bonus payments, which the Companies are quite unable to meet. Unless therefore the Government provide the men necessary to work all the Companies' Boats available, but idle, and financially assist the Canals, there is no prospect of making better use of the Canals, but on the contrary several of the large Canal Carrying Companies will be compelled almost immediately to relinquish their Carrying business altogether. The urgent importance of this position cannot be overstated as the business of the Northern Canal Carrying Companies is at the present moment very seriously imperilled. If this is brought about, it will result in the increased congestion of the Railways, which at the present time is particularly undesirable when the Government are anxious to relieve the Railways of some of their traffic.

CANAL OWNERS ONLY.

The Canal Carrying Companies are Traders over other Canals than their own, therefore, they have to pay Tolls & Terminal Charges for the use of the Waterway and premises of the other Companies. If the Carrying business is relinquished by such Carrying Companies, they will not only lose their own business as Carriers but also the Tolls & Terminal charges payable to them by such Carrying Companies which trade over their system. Their position in such cases will thus become doubly serious.

The enhanced prices of materials and labours, and the payment of War Bonuses renders it very difficult at present to keep the cost of maintenance of the Canals, towing paths, bridges, reservoirs, warehouses and wharves, within reasonable limits; and in such cases as the upkeep of these places which are constantly subsidizing, owing to the working of Minerals, and the difficulty in getting the requisite number of men to attend thereto, great risk is being incurred by the Canal Owners.

Several Canal Carriers or Bye-traders have during recent years given up their business, because of it being unremunerative thus seriously diminishing the Canal Owners Earnings from Toll & Terminal Receipts.

Any further diversion of traffic from the Canals with its consequent loss of Revenue, on account of the remaining Canal Traders finding it unprofitable to continue to work their Boats, must inevitably hasten the time when Canal Owners will be unable to efficiently maintain the Canals.

Should such a condition arise, Agricultural as well as Industrial interests will seriously suffer, as large quantities of

Goods, such as manure, etc., are conveyed by Boats for use on Farms adjoining the Canals, some of which run through long distances of purely Agricultural districts.

AS CANAL CARRIERS OR BYE-TRADERS,

The Bye-Traders or Canal Carriers, as distinguished from the Canal-owning Companies; who are also Canal Carriers; have to meet similar competition with the Railway Companies and have also to pay the Toll & Terminal charges of the Canal-owning Companies for the use of their Waterways and premises.

They have had to concede to their Employees additional weekly War Bonus payments to avoid strikes taking place.

To a somewhat similar extent, although they are not subject to Statutory Maxima Charges, they have had in some cases to increase their Conveyance Rates, which only partially meets their increased War Bonus payments and Working expenses; although such increased rates have in certain cases been raised to the level of, and even in some instances, higher than the Railway Rates.

The last increase granted to the Railway Employees placed the Canal Bye-traders in a worse position than ever because they are now unable to make a further increase in their Rates to the public and come of them fear unless the Government place them on the same basis as the Railway Companies) they will have no alternative but to give up their business as Canal Carriers.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR ENSURING THE BETTER UTILISATION OF CANALS

Government to make it known throughout the various Recruiting areas, also by public advertisement and through the Labour Exchanges, that additional men are required forthwith for work on the Canals.

All Canal Employees to be furnished with permanent Exemption Badges.

Statement of Mileage, Capital and Tonnage (Freight and Toll) of the undernoted Canals for the year 1905.

	Rly owned or Independent	Mileage	Capital £	Tonnage	
				Freight	Tolls
Aire & Calder Navigation	I	85	3,026,041	1,073,928	1,737,060
Bridgewater Canal	I	52	1,268,457	526,420	1,340,668
Leeds & Liverpool Canal Co.	I	145	1,758,071	329,586	2,138,241
Rochdale Canal	I	34	802,836	111,675	442,922
Shropshire Union Rly & C Co	R	201	1,863,136	469,950	135,211
Trent Navigation Co.	I	68	<u>157,134</u>	<u>66,158</u>	<u>283,353</u>
Totals		585	<u>8,875,675</u>	<u>2,577,717</u>	<u>6,077,455</u>
Birmingham Canal Co.	R	158	3,516,423	-	7,546,453
Bolton & Bury (Capital merged in Railway Company)	R	15	-	-	654,149
Calder & Hebble Navigation	I	27	371,927	-	463,285
Grand Junction Canal Co.	I	1881	2,156,821	-	1,794,233
Sheffield & South Yorks Nav'n	R	59	1,335,438	-	835,982
Sharpness New Docks Co.	I	55	1,272,361	-	1,053,721
Staffs & Worcs Canal	I	51	<u>302,984</u>	-	<u>722,640</u>
Totals		553	<u>8,955,954</u>	-	<u>13,070,463</u>
Grand Totals		1,138	17,831,629	2,577,717	19,147,918