

THE OMAHA DAILY BEE

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MONOPOLY IN GRAIN

Simonds-Shields Company Controls Traffic Over Milwaukee Road at Kansas City.

FACT PROVED AND THEN ADMITTED

All Grain Shippers Desiring Cars Must Notify This Firm.

MILWAUKEE CARS ARE SWITCHED FREE

Charge of \$5 Per Car Made on Those from Other Roads.

PEAVEY MAN ON WITNESS STAND

George F. Flack Defends Elevator Allowance from Union Pacific and Says Other Firms Get Considerable Amounts That Are Concealed.

KANSAS CITY, Oct. 22.—The Interstate Commerce commission here today began an investigation of the relations of railroads to grain dealers and elevator companies.

"We can't tell what will be written," said J. M. Marble, attorney for the commission.

Grain men have been subpoenaed

to appear this morning. Whether more will be asked to testify depends on the character of the testimony given."

N. F. Simonds of the Simonds-Shields Grain company, members of the Kansas City Board of Trade and buyers and sellers of grain, testified that his partner, E. W. Shields, is manager of an elevator in Kansas City, a portion of storage tanks of which his firm leases from the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway.

On direct examination Mr. Simonds said that Mr. Shields was employed as manager of an elevator by the Milwaukee road and received a stated monthly salary. This salary, he said, was not increased in any manner by any concessions received from the railroad. Later, in reply to a question from Commissioner Clarke, Mr. Simonds admitted that there were no switching charges made by the Milwaukee road on grain passing in and out of the elevator if it came over that road, but that a charge of 2½ a car was made if handled by any other road.

Bluffing on Country Grains.

Mr. Simonds denied that the fact that Mr. Shields was manager of the elevator had anything to do with the reasonableness of his firm's fees on the elevator.

Mr. Simonds said that in listing for grain in the country his firm did not deal entirely with those who handled regular elevator men, but said they did not like to bid for grain owned by independent elevator men for fear it might create a "feud" with the regulars. They had, prior to two years ago, received a few isolated letters from Oklahoma and Kansas persons asking them not to place bids with certain grain men, but had not let it influence their action.

Mr. Simonds is not now actively engaged in business, and was not familiar with all the firm's dealings. His partner, E. W. Shields, he said, was in St. Louis or Chicago, and Commissioner Clarke requested that the latter be wired to be on hand tomorrow morning to testify.

Frank G. Cromwell, vice president of the Hall-Baker Grain company, engaged principally in exporting grain, which leases elevators in Kansas and Nebraska, was asked:

"Has your company been in any agreement to fix prices?"

"Not now. I have no doubt that up to about two years ago the predecessor of this company had been a party to such agreements."

Mixing Grain in Elevators.

G. H. Hunter, a miller of Wellington, Kan., said that the effect of mixing grain in the elevators was detrimental. He said he had mixed grain to sell himself. His object was to sell it, with no consideration of the effect it had on others.

T. J. Gordon, grain broker of St. Joseph, Mo., said he had been notified not to buy from independent dealers in the country. The last notice of this kind came from Nebraska, a year ago. Gordon's replies to certain questions regarding shipments made by him from St. Joseph to eastern points did not satisfy Commissioners Clark and witness was requested to bring his books into court tomorrow.

One Company Controls Traffic.

In the grain inquiry this afternoon the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul's method of managing its big elevators was the question around which most of the interest centered. The rule that shippers who desire to send grain over the Milwaukee must notify a competitor, the Simonds-Shields Grain company, was proved and finally admitted. George B. French, general freight agent of the Milwaukee, testified that he wished the company was out of the elevator business.

C. L. Wilson testified that he was employed jointly by the Milwaukee Elevator company and the Simonds-Shields Grain company.

"From whom does the foreman get his orders regarding grain to be handled?"

"Mostly from Mr. Shields."

Simonds-Shields Grain company had no preference, witness testified. He said shippers who wanted to send out grain over the Milwaukee road must order cars through either himself or Shields. He finally said that he had sometimes had to decide when there was a shortage of cars who should have the cars. He denied that he gave his own employer preference, but said that 70 per cent of the grain that went through the elevator belongs to Simonds-Shields so, of course, that company got most of the cars.

"To what do you attribute the fact that so much of the grain going over the Milwaukee belongs to the Simonds-Shields Grain company?"

Wilson did not explain.

Mr. Clark took the witness in hand, saying:

"It is surprising how many men there are in this business who do not know anything about the business, but who are making a great success of it."

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