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LAHR MOTOR SALES COMPANY

"EVERYTHING FOR THE AUTOMOBILE"

Freight Car Shortage Apparent in Entire Western United States

Owing to What Is Considered the Discrimination by Eastern Railroads, the Western Lines Have been Denied Reciprocal Treatment in the Distribution of Cars.

Detroit, Feb. 18.—In spite of a serious handicap due to the shortage of automobile freight cars, Detroit automobile manufacturers managed to ship approximately 58,800 motor cars of the passenger type during January. This figure was obtained by a careful canvass of the concerns here and is a close approximation to the actual number. Yet this rather large shipment would have been much greater had the makers been able to secure all the railroad cars they wanted in which to convey the vehicles to their destinations. Although in many cases the number of automobiles that left the city was greater than ever before in the history of the concern in question, there are other big producers whose shipments were curtailed as much as 40 per cent by the lacking of railroad cars. One big maker, for instance, shipped a little over 3,500 automobiles, and would have been able to ship 5,000 could the freight cars have been secured.

Yet with this shipping situation and the materials markets troubling them, the car makers nevertheless enjoyed the largest January in the history of the business here, taking the industry collectively. It is an unusual thing for dealers to be crying for cars at this time of the year, and never before have they been so insistent for them when the winter months were on. In fact, so anxious have some of them become for cars that they have actually driven them over the snow-covered roads to their own towns rather than wait for freight shipping.

Number of Carloads
The traffic department of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce has reported total carload shipments for the whole United States for January to be 18,654. Although in some cases less than five automobiles make up a carload, and in others the number is greater, it seems logical to say that each freight car would average five machines. On that basis, the number of freight carloads leaving Detroit in January was 11,760. This figure is pretty near 65 per cent of the total number. However, there can be no disguising of the fact that freight conditions

are bad. In most cases the automobile freight car is a special type, and while it is of use to other lines of industry as well as to the automobile maker, the latter is not in so good a position, for it is hard for him to utilize the other types of cars. But necessity has forced the traffic departments of the big companies to take whatever railroad equipment they can secure quickly.

Utilizing What They Can Get
As a result, it is not uncommon to see big shipments of motor vehicles on flat cars, and in some cases they are even utilizing gondola and other types of coal cars. These they box over and really make very presentable box cars out of them. Some of the makers who have made use of flats are the Studebaker Corp., Max well, Paige, the Overland in Toledo and the Velie at Moline, Ill. Wherever possible these flat cars have so far been used only for the shipping of export cars to the coast. That is, the export machines are very tightly boxed and no harm can come to them through open shipping machinery, etc. Where the run is comparatively short, Studebaker has been using flats in conjunction with heavy tarpaulins which they use very carefully to cover the cars against any weather conditions. The use of gondola cars is perhaps the most unusual adaptation of whatever can be secured in the way of railroad rolling stock.

According to the traffic bureau statistics, there are in use by the American railroads at the present time 68,225 automobile freight cars, and there is prospect of 10,000 more being added to this equipment in the very near future. This will give an enormous equipment designed for the special service of the automobile industry, which to-day has developed to the point where it is one of the chief sources of freight revenue of the railroads, but even with the added number it is doubtful if the supply will keep pace with motor car production. The railroads seem to be doing all they can to help the movement of motor cars, but they did not anticipate the demand and, although they have hastened to build more equipment, the difficulty of getting material

has held up the placing of the additional freight cars in service. As a notable example of what the railroads are doing it might be mentioned that the Santa Fe and other Western roads are sending trains of empties back to the automobile center instead of holding them at their destinations for loads to take back.

In line with the endeavors of the railroads, the car makers are instructing their dealers that under no circumstances must they use the freight cars for shortage of their machines, but they must unload them immediately on arrival. In the past this has been one cause of delay in getting the cars back, but it is believed that this situation has greatly improved, for the dealers recognize the need of co-operation for the good of all concerned.

A considerable factor in the present dearth of freight cars is the tie-up in the East, according to one of the traffic men here. His concern has sixty-nine cars tied up in Norfolk, Va., waiting to be loaded on steamers, and doubtless there are many other such instances. There is no place to store the automobiles pending their being put on the ships, and consequently they are letting them lie in the freight cars. This is quite prevalent at all the export points, and is being practiced by many of the makers. Due to this and other causes of congestion in the East, the Lake Shore, for instance, has been holding up shipments for eastern points as far back as its lines as Toledo. Then, too, other industries are demanding a great many cars, war shipments are very large, and the whole combination of circumstances at the present time is making it a puzzle to move the output. One day last week, as an instance, there were only fifteen automobile freight cars received in the whole city of Detroit. That, however, was an exceptionally bad day.

Shipping Costs More
A sidelight on the very serious shipping situation is the added cost to the car makers of each car shipped due to the troubles they have to go through in utilizing other than automobile box cars. Whenever flats have to be pressed into service, there is an additional item of expense where tarpaulins are used, for these have to be sent back to the factory. If it is necessary to box in a gondola car, there is a large cost item to be considered. Loading crews must be larger, and this adds to the cost. Taking everything into consideration, one big shipper of cars said that it costs from \$2 to \$3 more per automobile to ship them than it did when conditions were better and it was easier to get the right sort of freight equipment.

It is indeed deplorable that at a time when it seems impossible to meet the demand for cars, the makers should be handicapped by the shipping trouble.

It has meant, and will continue to mean, curtailment of the production of cars to adjust the output to transportation facilities.

MITCHELL OWNERS PROUD.
Mitchell owners have acquired a new aggressiveness in the last few days, because of performances last Sunday by two of the Racine-made cars. One stunt was in New Jersey, the other in New York City, and both vehicles were regular demonstrators owned by the Carl H. Page Motor company, their distributors.

A prospective buyer's demand that he be driven over the sandy road from Jamesburg to Freehold as part of a trial ride in the Newark demonstrator furnished the Jersey sensation. This road was so bad that most cars trying it were forced to stop

or be towed by horses, but the Mitchell Six traveled the 14 miles on its own power. In one place the ruts were so deep that V. S. Richardson had to borrow a spade to clear a space for his front axle, his rear wheels being in one set of tracks and the front tires in another. Then the car moved along on the low gear. Richardson did not carry the chains. The spokes were covered an inch deep with sand at the trip's end. The passenger, needless to say, bought a Mitchell.

In this city (New York), a climb up Fort George hill was arranged to find out just what the Mitchell Six could do on a grade. With three passengers the car was turned at five different spots on the hill, and finished each time on high gear. Then five passengers were taken up, with a fly-

ing start of 40 miles an hour and a rate of 18 miles at the summit, all on high. With three aboard and a 40-mile start, the rate was 23 miles an hour on high at the grade top. A.

W. Berger took the general manager, E. A. Gilmore, as passenger, then started from a standstill at the hill's bottom and went over the top, using high gear all the time.

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- Weight of car is 2300 pounds.

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"Matchless Mitchell" is not mere talk, for the "THE Six of '16" is all that. One ride behind the wheel of this master car will prove it so conclusively that you will need no further conviction. Never have we seen such flowing power—such dependability—such flexibility—such "parlor car" riding comfort—such perfect rhythm of action. You'll be as enthusiastic as we are when you know this motor masterpiece.

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