

THE GROWTH OF COAL SHIPMENTS BY MOTOR TRUCK INTO ST. LOUIS AND ITS EFFECT ON THE TRANSPORTATION AND MINING INDUSTRIES

BY

FRANK T. TIERRE

Better Business Bureau, East St. Louis, Illinois

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the practice of hauling coal from mines by truck, direct to consumers in St. Louis, the general trucking rate was \$2.00 per ton. At this rate the railroads were not bothered or even concerned, as it made no inroads upon their tonnage, so to speak, but the individual trucker soon discovered that this rate would enable him not only a fair profit on the haul, but it also opened up an easy avenue for him to get into the coal business at a nominal cost regardless of the equipment he had; he advertised by telephone number, carried no stock on hand, securing his coal from nearby mines in Illinois and delivering direct to the consumer in quantities of from 1 to 8 tons at a very low figure, much less than the rail rate that dealers with yards and railroad switches must pay. Regular dealers must and do have to take care of public demands under any and all conditions while these individual truckers, sometimes called "Snow Birds", meet none of these obligations or requirements. They became so numerous that at the present time more than 1,200 are engaged in this particular line of transportation of coal into St. Louis.

While there is no means of accurately checking the total movement of coal at both sides of the Mississippi River, it is estimated that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total truck coal goes to points on the east side such as East St. Louis, Madison, Granite City, etc. Due to the fact that East side cities are closer to the mine a relatively larger amount per capita of truck coal goes to these communities. This estimate of $\frac{1}{3}$ of the truck tonnage to East side communities and $\frac{2}{3}$ to St. Louis, Mo., is arrived at after consultation with a number of large truck mines who agree, after an analysis of their records, that this division is approximately correct. It is therefore apparent that the total truck movement and consequent loss of rail tonnage is approximately as follows, during the period under observation in this analysis.

	Tonnage actually checked as coming across Free Bridge to St. Louis. Estimated as $\frac{2}{3}$ of total movement.	$\frac{1}{3}$ estimated as going to East side communities.	Total estimated movement.
Feb. 9-10 (24 hours).....	8,655	4,328	12,983
Feb. 10-11 (24 hours).....	10,438	5,219	15,657
Feb. 11- (16 hours).....	8,412	4,206	12,618
Feb. 12- (12 hours).....	1,253	622	1,875
Feb. 13-14 (24 hours).....	8,513	4,256	12,769
Feb. 14-15 (24 hours).....	7,887	3,915	11,755
Total.....	45,118	22,559	67,677

From the above it is apparent that the total truck movement during this five day period was approximately 67,677 tons, which was lost to the railroad, and is the equivalent of 1504 forty-five ton cars.

The above gives a very accurate picture of how trucking is increasing to St. Louis, Missouri. The Free Bridge has been checked more or less periodically for the last eighteen months. Each check reveals a material increase over all preceding checks. The check made in November and December showed a peak movement of slightly over 6,000 tons a day. This check shows an increase over any preceding check of from a minimum of 30 per cent to a maximum of 70 per cent increase. It explodes completely the idea that trucks cannot successfully operate in bad weather. The first day of this check it was 3 below zero, one of the coldest days in recent years, and there was a large quantity of snow and ice on the roads.

The year 1930 is the last year in which accurate figures of the truck coal loadings, St. Clair and Madison County, Illinois, are available. During 1930 slightly over 900,000 tons were loaded into trucks. From the above figures, it will be seen that in a good week truck loadings now are running close to 90,000 tons a week total.