

Conditions in the West

Special Correspondence by **E. CORA HIND**, Commercial and Agricultural Editor, Free Press, Winnipeg, Man.

There are so many questions in connection with the grain trade at the present time that it is a little difficult to judge of values.

First of all the West has had several very severe storms during the week which has added materially to difficulties of interior transportation and in some sections it is still snowing. This is most abnormal for the time of year, and it is safe betting that no one envies the railway man his job. Provincial Cabinet Ministers who were due to speak at the spring show at Saskatoon were reported "snow bound and unable to attend." This sounds funny for March in a country where we usually have bare fields a good part of the winter. In spite of the snow, however, and delayed trains, inspections at Winnipeg have materially increased during the week.

The general manager of the C. N. R. has gone up to Saskatoon to see if he can help in the clearing of their lines, especially the Goose Lake, but no definite arrangements seem to have come through in the matter of clearing the Government elevators at Saskatoon and Moose Jaw.

George Bury, vice-president of the C. P. R. was a visitor during the week, and, while he would not talk for publication, he did not disguise his anxiety as to the transportation situation. He went through to the Coast, and has promised that on his return he will make a statement to the press. Meantime the embargo on Fort William eastward is certainly being most rigidly enforced and indeed it is being enforced further west.

Big Mills Closed

The Maple Leaf Flour mills at Kenora and the Lake of the Woods Milling Company's mills at Keewatin have been tied up since Friday 17th and Monday 20th respectively.

In the matter of the Lake of the Woods Milling Company, the order was put into effect at 6 o'clock Monday evening and the C. P. R. refused to haul out a bunch of cars that had been loaded that day and the mill was obliged to secure C. N. R. cars and unload the flour into them; the C. P. R. then consented to haul the cars to the head of the Lakes and turn them over to the Canadian Northern. The capacity of these mills is 8,000 barrels a day and they have been running "capacity" for months and were so heavily sold ahead that they intended to strain their capacity to the utmost during the present month and the early part of April in order to meet their obligations. Now they have not turned a wheel for five days and there is no prospect of relief, as far as can be seen. A very large percentage of their export orders were for the British government for delivery during the first part of April. Their orders for domestic delivery would have filled anywhere from 120 to 125 cars. Their mill at Portage la Prairie, west of Winnipeg is also affected by the embargo, but there they are drawing the flour from their mill to the C. N. R. and work it out that way. It is rumoured that the C. P. R. refused to even switch cars over the C. N. R., unless they were C. N. R. cars sent over to be loaded. The C. P. R. is evidently going to make a very strenuous fight to keep its cars on its own line.

The Canadian Northern have an enormous number of C. P. R. cars now and it is stated there has been serious difficulty in the way of getting them home in anything like reasonable time.

The Western Canada Flour Mills and the Ogilvies at Winnipeg having access to the three lines of road are apparently able to keep running, though they too complain of insufficient supply of cars.

The mills at Sudbury also claim that they are up against an embargo as impenetrable as a concrete wall and that they have not as yet been able to secure cars to ship flour sold for February delivery.

The Grain Act.

There is great satisfaction in the west over the fact that the protest of the organized farmers and the western news papers together with the earnest protest of the western members in the House of Commons, had the effect of preventing the drastic amendment proposed to the Grain Act, which would have put all power of car distribution in the hands of the Grain Commission. The only trouble now is that through Sir George Foster insisting on his own way, fully 10 days have been lost wherein some effort might have been made to move the crop which was inefficiently housed. While the politicians were arguing, the fine days that would have been good for

this movement, slipped by and now the west is up against a heavy and belated snow fall, as referred to in another paragraph. It is to be hoped, however, that this time Sir George Foster will take the hint and leave the car distribution clause alone. It was evident from the full debate in the House of Commons in Hansard that the move to secure this amendment came entirely from the Grain Commission and Sir George Foster.

If it were not that the whole western situation with regard to wheat movement is so serious "it would be to laugh" at the various expedients that have been resorted to compel the western grain growers to use the Government interior terminals. The western farmers remain remarkably obtuse to the benefits of these storage houses, it is only under force of strict embargoes that they have filled, the farmers being firm believers in keeping a car that has been once loaded with grain moving until its gets to either a lake or ocean terminal. Grant Hall, vice-president of western lines for C. P. R. is now at the coast and in an interview given through the press there suggested that the elevator at Vancouver be utilized by the Dominion government to take care of some of the commandeered grain, to be moved out when the Panama canal is opened, which is expected shortly. He went on to say that this would be a practical way of demonstrating the advisability of shipping grain by Vancouver. Apparently Mr. Hall's idea would be that the Government should buy grain in the far west to fill this elevator at Vancouver and then sell a corresponding proportion of their commandeered wheat at the head of Lake Superior against the purchase. It is remembered that the grain was commandeered on the 27th of November last at an hour's notice because there was such a rush to get it for the British government, at least so we were told. The idea of storing it at Vancouver to await the opening of the Panama canal is certainly amusing. It is to be noticed that Sir George Foster will commandeer no more wheat.

The Commandeering of Boats.

Considerable uneasiness has been stirred up by a report which reached Ft. William and later Winnipeg that the Canadian government is likely to commandeer a number of lake vessels at the opening of the season for the Atlantic trade, and to ship grain to Britain. Up to the time of writing it has not been possible to get any confirmation or denial of this report. There are one or two things that lend color to the rumor and perhaps the first is that the Dominion government has established an unenviable record for doing "fool things" in connection with the grain trade. The second is that conditions, with regard to the Atlantic coast trade are really serious and the people in Newfoundland are actually suffering for want of flour. The rate from Sydney N. B., to Newfoundland has gone up from 15 cents to 45 cents in the last two weeks and it is stated on pretty good authority that flour from Newfoundland has been lying at Sydney since October last waiting for boats for trans-shipment, and the governor of Newfoundland, it is stated, has been making urgent appeals for some relief for his people. That to curtail the movement on the Great Lakes would help in the long run, is very questionable. There are not a very great many of the lake vessels that would be suitable for crossing the ocean, but there are a few; there are however quite a large number that would be suitable for the Atlantic coast trade.

Lake Rates for the Opening.

Lake rates for the opening are extremely high. About 6,500,000 bushels are already under charter and the rates are 5 1-2 cents to Buffalo and 9 1-2 cents to Montreal. Last year at the opening the rate to Buffalo was 1 3-4 cents, while this year from Duluth 6 1-2 cents to Buffalo was bid on the 24th. It was hoped that there might be an early opening and that the ore fleet would be up for at least one load; snow came so early and so heavy that it was thought that the ice in the harbors and on Lake Superior would not be very thick, but it turns out that this is not true. Duluth reports 35 inches of ice in the harbor and 20 inches of ice extending for over 20 miles out on the lake, with rough ice fields driven in by the gales as far out as the eye can carry, and conditions are very similar at Fort William. With the continued cold weather this means a late opening and news reached Winnipeg late Friday afternoon that many of the ore boats had been notified that they must not attempt to come up for a load of wheat.

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If this is carried out, it will mean still further congestion for the opening of navigation and is really a most serious matter.

The Market.

The market has been a very unsatisfactory one all week. Cables have been weak and irregular and there has been much re-selling. The market has been very much of a professional one but between Friday, 17th and Friday 24th has gained slightly in strength. On both May and July there has been a better cash demand for wheat nearly all week, this especially for the opening. There has been a good deal of heavy trading in oats this week also and the houses that were buying indicated that they were for Government contracts. The only sensational item of the market was the slump in flax. This is due mainly to the very big decrease in freight rates from the Argentine, making it possible to bring larger quantities to the United States and to the fact that offers of Indian flax were very liberal. In Britain this seemed sufficient to offset known smallness of Canadian stocks. During the week, May flax dropped from \$2.08 7-8 to \$1.93 1-4 and July from \$2.10 1-2 to \$1.94 1-2.

Outlook for Seeding.

The outlook for seeding is certainly not bright and in view of the fact that there is small prospect of getting on the land before the 20th of April to even harrow it, let alone to plow, it looks as if the area in wheat must be greatly reduced. There will undoubtedly be a lot of planting on stubble, but with the shortage of labor and the shortening of the seeding period, it will be humanly impossible to get in anything like the percentage that was seeded last year. It is probable however, that these conditions will tend to a very much heavier seeding of coarse grains.

Live Stock.

The live stock movement for the week has been fair and prices have been very high and steady. The movement of hogs was 10,031 head and of these over 3,000 went to Eastern Canada. The receipts of cattle were curtailed by the storms. The arrival of horses from the East were 852. Everything points to the fact that the supply of merchantable hogs in the Canadian West has been pretty well exhausted for the time being and continued high prices are looked for.

First Frau—My poor boy Fritz is having a dreadful time. He is with the army in Russia.

Second Frau—And what about your other boy, Hans?

First Frau—Oh, he's all right. He's in the navy. —Bystander.