

Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

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While your western correspondent has been spending the past 10 days in the east, the matters dealt with have been of vast importance to the west as well as the east.

The sheep breeders and wool growers who sent representatives from every province in the Dominion to the conference at Toronto, out of which has been organized the first purely co-operative association that will take in the whole Dominion, have made a new record for Canada. The daily press have given more or less complete account of the plans and purposes of the new association. It is a commercial organization formed primarily for the purpose of selling the wool clip of Canada at the best price, but it is something much better and broader in spirit. For the first time representative sheep men from the nine provinces of Canada sat round a common board and threshed out their differences and made concessions to meet the varying needs of the widely scattered provinces, and were surprised to find on how many points they agreed. The far west learned for the first time the extent to which Quebec has succeeded in co-operative organization, while Quebec opened eyes at the big flocks of the ranchers of the west.

It was found that all the provinces were fully agreed that if the Government of Canada needed the wool of Canada for war purposes the entire clip of 1918 would be freely sold to the Government on the basis of last year's prices, but if the Government did not want it then, that they should have the right of the open market to the south.

At the end of the week when plans were well forward, the wool growers met the manufacturers. The manufacturers came with a neat little cut and dried plan to the effect that all Canadian wool should be embargoed, that the combing wools should be sent to the United States to be combed (in bond) and returned to Canada. When the wool growers asked why the wool should not be sold to the United States in the usual way and the manufacturers buy their "tops" in the United States markets, as they have previously bought them from Britain, the manufacturers were obliged to admit that the American tops would be dearer. This, of course, meant that if the Canada wool was commandeered or embargoed they hoped to buy it at a lower price. There are two reasons why the manufacturers are so very anxious to have Canadian wool embargoed. One is the hope of getting it cheaper, and the other is the fear that if it is not embargoed Australia and New Zealand will bring such pressure to bear on Great Britain that she will not again apportion to Canada a certain amount of Australasian wool at the low price at which it was commandeered, but will put it up to auction as has been done for the United States.

There is not much doubt that the story sent to Australia last summer that the Canadian Government was selling the Canadian clip to the United States while the Canadian mills were buying Australian wool at half the price, emanated from the manufacturers. The true story was that the Co-operative Commissioner of Saskatchewan having grown tired of offering the clip of that province to Canadian manufacturers and receiving no bids for it, shipped direct to the United States, and sold there at an extremely high figure. The Federal authorities had nothing to do with it. At the joint meeting of wool growers and manufacturers in Toronto last Friday, the manufacturers were told plainly that the only arrangement for fixing the price, which the wool growers would consider would be equal representation on any committee or commission appointed to deal with the matter and also that the price of the manufacturers' products be fixed as well as the price of wool. If the manufacturers had desired to bind the wool growers together more closely in their new organization they could not have succeeded better than by making the demands they did for a complete embargo of the southern market. The development of this new organization will be watched with keen interest. The 20,000 shares will be distributed over the provinces, and the board of 15 directors is absolutely representative of all the provinces. It is a one man, one vote, proposition, and the profits are to be distributed on the basis of business furnished whether those furnishing business are shareholders or not.

A matter in which the Canadian West is more vitally interested than any part of Canada is the plan of purchasing 1,000 tractors by the Government and selling them out for cash. The man who devised this scheme, J. D. McGregor of Brandon, Man., has watched the development of the small tractor with great interest. He is a practical man, and is convinced that the "Fordson" is what the west has been waiting for. This tractor is so easy of operation that it can be run by women as well as by men. It is capable of performing many operations on a farm beside merely plowing. It can be, and is, operated with coal oil. It is a strategic move securing them, and it will mean that not only will it be possible to get an enormous amount of plowing done in the spring and increase the acreage for oats and barley as well as wheat, but it will mean an enormous increase in breaking during the coming summer.

The placing of the whole scheme of production and conservation under the department of agriculture is both sane and sensible. There is no excuse for creating new and costly machinery when there are well organized departments already in existence through which the work can be done.

Possibly under this new arrangement some real progress in conservation will be achieved as well as production stimulated. So far the conservation of food has been very much of a farce. To-day the waste and the needless consumption of food in pub-

lic places is nothing short of a crime.

There is not much sense in ordering a hotel to serve bran muffins and oat cakes when at the same time there is no check on the service of rich cakes and pastry which require quantities of eggs, butter and white flour for their preparation.

The practice of extravagant afternoon teas and dansants goes on unchecked all over the country, while at the same time the individual housewife is being asked to save and substitute if the men and women overseas are not to starve. The whole question of food regulation so far has been so inconsistent that it is small wonder if little progress has been made.

STOCKYARDS.

Stockyards and livestock exchanges, will, in a few weeks be very completely under government control. At the conference this week in Ottawa to draw up rules and regulations for their operation under the Livestock and Livestock products act, there was no disposition on the part of the government to impose needless and tiresome regulations that would hamper trade, but on the other hand there was a very evident determination to so safeguard trade as to stimulate production and induce every livestock producer to market through the yards rather than to sell at country points.

Henceforth all commission men doing business on a stock-yard must be members of a livestock exchange, and must be licensed and bonded. Exchanges will be held responsible to the government for the conduct of their members and the bonds will be in favor of the government.

Altogether much progress has been made in these past ten days, and the Union Government is certainly not marking time.

National System of Grain Elevators Proposed for England

Capacity for 5,000,000 quarters needed at principal seaports—Hope to secure steady supply by means of grain warrants recognized as legal security

English newspapers are manifesting considerable interest in the proposal for a national system of grain elevators. The Liverpool "Journal of Commerce," pointing out that such a plan was submitted to the Asquith government in 1915, only to be rejected, continues:

"It is known that the neglect to take action in the matter led to the refusal last season to accept the 25,000,000 bushels of wheat offered by the Canadian Government.

"As in the case of the cold storage question, all that has been done is to allow things to drift until at the present time the makeshift expedient is being adopted of hiring as well as erecting storage accommodation in various localities. This emphatically will not do. What is required is the acceptance of definite business-like proposals, such as have already been put forward, and the intrusting of the necessary authority to carry out the scheme to those who understand exactly what is required. Some of the points raised by J. Hay Thorburn in a statement on the subject which he has just issued deserve careful consideration, particularly at a moment when it is known that Canada is putting pressure upon our Government to move in this important matter.

"The object sought is to secure and maintain a sufficiently large reserve of wheat by the creation of a public corporation, and through the operation of this body provide elevators at the principal seaports giving storage to 5,000,000 quarters, and to supplement the port system with smaller elevators in agricultural centres.

"It is estimated that in normal times there are never more than three weeks' supply of grain in merchants and millers' hands with three to six weeks' supply on passage, so in respect of these essential commodities we are living from hand to mouth. That this should be the case to-day is a melancholy confession of inability to grasp the needs of the time. The average consumption of breadstuffs may be taken as about 33,000,000 quarters of wheat, of which only 8,000,000 quarters are grown at home, so that 25,000,000 quarters annually have to be imported.

"The dominions have set us a fine example in this matter. Western Canada alone has capacity for 10,000,000 quarters, and is rapidly increasing its storage capacity. It is stated that forty new elevators are to be erected in Alberta this summer, each with a capacity of 65,000 bushels. There are terminal elevators at Port Arthur, Saskatoon, Moosejaw and Calgary, each with a storage capacity of about 400,000 quarters, equipped with the latest cleaning and drying ma-

chinery, for lack of which in some years there has been enormous loss of grain. The Australian Government has decided to adopt a national system, and other countries are moving in the direction of a national policy.

"Something will have to be done in Great Britain. The success of the scheme will, of course, depend on attracting a constant flow of wheat to the elevators by a system which is advantageous to farmers, elevator companies, and merchants at home and abroad. This can be accomplished by means of grain warrants, which would be recognized as legal security and transferable by indorsement to be honored by the corporation only in grain. These warrants would be recognized at home and abroad as a first class security having actual goods behind them, and holders would be entitled to obtain loans and advances on the security of these warrants.

"The advantage from the miller's point of view would be that he could rely on getting delivery of the grain represented by the warrant. Farmers would be encouraged to make an increased production by the knowledge that their crops would be saved from vermin — it is estimated that damage to the extent of from £15,000,000 to £20,000,000 annually is done by rats — while if the season should prove to be a bad one and the grain out of condition, it could be treated at the hospital elevators which would be included in the scheme. The warrant for the crop would be lodged by the farmer in the bank, and he would choose his own time for selling.

"To Canada, it is believed, the setting up of a national elevator system in Great Britain would be of far-reaching importance, as it would provide storage for big crop years, when under present conditions wheat has to be thrown on the market, and another important point is that as the harvests in Canada, Australia and India do not coincide, a constant supply would be insured to home elevators.

"It is not proposed that the elevator system should be conducted as an ordinary commercial undertaking out to make profits, but as a national self-supporting institution, whose object would be to carry out its functions at the cheapest possible rate for the benefit of producers and consumers. It is considered that the directors of the proposed storage institution should be nominated by such public bodies as the Board of Trade, Board of Agriculture, the Overseas Dominions, the Corn Trade Association, the Millers' Association, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and the great dock interests. The necessary capital has even been offered to the Government on reasonable terms.