

Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

Winnipeg, Oct. 11, 1917.

The strike of the terminal elevator employees at the head of the lakes has been settled after a fashion, by the minister of labor but it is questionable if either parties are satisfied and there is grave reason to fear that the decision of the minister, to advance all wages much ahead of the scale for similar work in other industries, will lead to serious disturbances.

The curious feature of the decision is that the biggest advance in wages was made to the men employed by the month, who had not asked for more, having received two advances of 10 per cent each within the last three months. In addition to an advance of 5 per cent these men were also granted full time for overtime. Men employed by the month have never been granted overtime for the reason that when weather is bad and they cannot work they are never docked; they get two weeks holidays with pay and, if absent through sickness their pay goes on. Few of these men went out on strike as few, if any, of them belong to the union, and they only quit work because they were threatened that if they continued to work their homes would be burned and their own lives would be in danger. Of course the union leaders deny that there were any threats made, but there are plenty of witnesses to the fact. The union is not recognized by the elevator owners and operators under the settlement and they still deal with their men direct. If a man has a grievance he must go to the management of his elevator for redress and if he cannot get it that way he must then go to the director of elevators Leslie Boyd and take a member of the union with him. Any decision made by the director of elevators will be final. Members of the committee representing the terminal elevators returned to the city to-day and were quite frank in stating that they were not at all satisfied with the arrangement made but having previously declared their willingness to abide by a government decision they are prepared to accept that decision and will certainly support the director of elevators in the administration of his new office.

The rates which terminal may charge are fixed by government through the Canada grain act and ordinarily are not subject to change during the period of any crop year. They have remained the same for many years. The new arrangement has added a wage bill of from \$15,000 to \$20,000 per annum on the large houses and proportionate amounts on the small. Coal is double the price at the lake head that it was when war opened, insurance also has doubled. It may be that the next move will be to ask for increased charges which could be established by an Order-In-Council under the war measures act.

In the mean time a very serious condition prevails at the lake front and it is one that should not be allowed to continue a moment longer, namely the absolutely unguarded condition of the terminal elevators. All our bridges, harbors at seaboard, railways and the like are guarded but this huge system of elevators is unprotected. During the balance of the season of open water it might easily happen that a few well placed bombs might put the whole place out of commission and when the close comes the elevators will rapidly be filled with wheat which will be the property of Britain and her allies. Surely under these conditions a proper military guard should be maintained. The curious feature of the whole situation is that during the first year of the war a most absurdly costly military guard was maintained, then, presumably on the ground of cost, this guard was withdrawn and no other adequate means of protection substituted. Another fact which has come to light in the present strike is, that while a very large percentage of the employed are of alien enemy nationality they were stirred up to the strike by the English speaking men on the various gangs and these English speaking men had been put on, because at the opening of the war the Government had asked that so far as possible English-speaking labor should be employed on the elevators. The operators complied as far as they could, but it is never easy to get English-speaking men to work at the shovelling. The few that were employed seemed to have proved somewhat of the "walking delegate" type. Time and again during the course of the strike, the foreign workmen offered to return to work if they were given protection. These were the men who had not struck but who had quit work on account of their lives and property being threatened. Any day during

the strike had the Government afforded the protection asked for, the elevators could have been fully manned and operated. Every day prior to the strike operators were turning away men who wanted to come to work and who apparently considered the wages good or they could not have applied as there is really no shortage of work in the country.

If through this ten day delay Britain and her allies are shy that amount of wheat, to wit 12,000,000 bushels which should have been moved before navigation closed, the onus will not be on the terminal elevator operators at the head of the lakes.

NO CONTRACT YET.

For several days buying practically ceased in the country, while the elevator lines waited for a reply to their telegram to Sir George Foster asking for a definite assurance that the wheat which they were buying on the basis of \$2.21 in the country could be sold to Britain and her allies at the same price. So far Sir George Foster has not even replied to the telegram, but the fact that James Stewart head of the export company, who was in conference with the British representatives at Ottawa, has returned and is taking all wheat offered and has stated to the press that he does not anticipate any orders to cease buying, has restored confidence to some extent and most, though not all, of the big houses have resumed buying, though some are not buying up to capacity and farmers are being encouraged to ship cars on their own account. There is quite a large percentage of the stocks at Port William held for farmers' account.

The embargo which was placed by the railways, to prevent undue congestion at the head of the lakes, during the strike, was lifted Wednesday morning on the C. P. R. and Monday night on the C. N. R., but even yet the full flow of grain is not established. Three days of no loading in the country make a big difference. Receipts coming forward continue to be mainly one northern. The lake front yards are well cleaned up and barring accidents and given decent weather the movement from now to the close of navigation should be very rapid. The outward loading is running from two and a quarter to two and a half millions daily.

LIVESTOCK.

Already men are taking advantage of the Government offer to pay 50 per cent of the freight on stocker cattle going east to be finished and the first load of 279 left the Winnipeg yards for Ontario points Thursday night.

Cattle movement is extremely heavy at all western yards. Calgary reported today 100 cars of beef cattle, with no stockers; this is an unprecedented run for those yards. Winnipeg received 3700 cattle beside 584 hogs. Prices are holding very steady in view of receipts, the best steers at Winnipeg making \$11.00.

FARM WORK.

Weather has, on the whole, been good for both threshing and farm work generally. There has been some sharp frost which has hastened the digging of potatoes, but fall plowing has made good progress.

THE CROP IN P. E. I.

(Special to The Journal of Commerce.)

The crop report just issued by the Provincial Department of Agriculture gives conditions as follows:—

Hay and clover—Average crop.
Wheat and barley—Slightly below the average.
Potatoes—Above the average—Acreage much larger than last year.
Roots—Above the average.
Apples and plums—Average crop.
As to live stock the report says:—
Horses—Demand, poor; prices, high.
Cattle—A strong demand for milk cows—Prices high; good stock, scarce.
Sheep—An increase in numbers, and improvement in quality. Lamb crop above the average; prices, high.
Swine—Young pigs scarce owing to losses in litters—Demand, keen; prices, high.

Dairying—The supply of milk will be slightly below the average.
The following statement shows the estimate acreage, yield and value of the field crops.

	Acreage.	Yield.	Value.
Hay and clover.	198,000	297,000 tons	\$3,528,000
Wheat	36,500	511,000 bus.	1,022,000
Oats	199,500	5,795,250 "	3,471,150

FOOD CROP RESULTS.

(New York Journal of Commerce.)

The U. S. Government report for October 1 on crop results of the present year is not final, but is likely to indicate pretty closely what is to be relied upon. There is some falling off from the first of September indications, on account of untimely frost, but in most items there is a substantial gain over last year. With wheat, which is of the most importance, the gain is slight, only from 649,800,000 bushels to 659,800,000.

The decline in corn for the month was from 3,247,500,000 to 3,210,700,000 bushels, but this is a high record, and compares with 2,583,200,000 bushels last year. As foreigners are not accustomed to this excellent food product, except for cattle and hogs, and our own people know how to use it and are rather fond of it, there is a chance for a large substitution for the more costly grain. Oats show an increase over last year, from 1,251,900,000 bushels to 1,580,700,000. This is used for human food to a considerable extent on both sides, but more abroad than here. The increase in rye is not large, from 47,400,000 bushels to 56,000,000 and that for barley from 180,900,000 to 201,600,000. Less of the latter than usual is likely to be used for making beer and more for food, though it is not a popular article with us.

The largest increase relatively is in the potato crop, and that is of considerable consequence in the home market. The total output now indicated is 452,900,000 bushels, compared with last year's 285,400,000. This is a nutritious food of universal acceptance. So are beans, for which the report seems not to be complete. For the five states of New York, Michigan, Colorado, New Mexico and California the production is stated as 15,800,000 bushels, compared with 8,800,000 last year. Fruits, so far as reported, do not show up so well. Only apples and peaches appear in the list, and these are largely used for preservation in one form or another. There is a decrease in the total crop of apples from 202,200,000 to 176,600,000 bushels, and in what is designated as the "commercial crop," or that which enters into trade, from 25,700,000 to 21,100,000 barrels.

Some statements for exports in the month of August are given, partly in quantities and partly in value. Wheat shows only 5,000,000 bushels, compared with 11,000,000 bushels in that month last year, but considerable has been held back for lack of regular shipping. Breadstuffs as a whole were sent abroad to the value of \$45,000,000, or \$10,000,000 more than in the same month last year, while it is said that exports of oats doubled and fresh beef increased 500 per cent. The total exports of breadstuffs, meat, dairy products, cotton, cottonseed oil and mineral oils, amounted to \$155,576,612, compared with \$108,422,881 in August last year. There seems likely to be a considerable stimulus to the export of foodstuffs, especially grain and meat, under the food administration activities and the tendency to home economy.

LICENSES FOR WHOLESALE DEALERS.

The Food Controller has decided not to fix an arbitrary price for potatoes. This decision has been arrived at as the result of a meeting at Ottawa of representatives of the eastern provinces, acting as a special sub-committee of the fruit and vegetables committee of the Food Controller's office.

Registration of wholesale dealers in potatoes has already been ordered, and it will be unlawful for any person to engage in the wholesale potato business without a license.

The sub-committee decided not to fix the price at \$1.25 per bag, to the cost of producing a 90-lb. bag in each of the five eastern provinces was as follows: Ontario, \$1.27; Quebec, \$1.50; New Brunswick, \$1.35 to \$1.50; Nova Scotia, \$1.05; Prince Edward Island, 90 cents. To these costs must be added a fair profit to the grower, freight and the profits necessary to the wholesaler and retailer. Careful estimates indicate that there will be a considerable surplus in excess of normal consumption.

Potatoes	36,500	6,752,500 "	3,376,250
Barley	3,500	80,500 "	80,500
Mixed Grains	7,800	312,000 "	187,200
Buckwheat	2,800	84,000 "	84,000
Turnips and mangels	8,000	3,920,000 "	588,000
Corn (fodder)	230	2,415 tons	15,000
Peas	60	1,200 bus.	2,500
Total			\$12,354,000