

Three Main Atlantic Channels for Canadian Grain.

Canadian grain flows to tidewater on the Atlantic through three main Channels: The Canadian all-water route, via Port Colborne to St. Lawrence ports; the Canadian Lake and rail route, via steamer to Georgian Bay and rail to St. Lawrence ports in summer and St. John and Halifax in winter, and the American route via Buffalo, either by the State Barge Canal or direct rail.

The factors governing this movement are cost, expedition and availability of ocean tonnage. As has been stated, the State Barge Canal route is the cheapest, the inclusive rate from the head of the Lakes to New York averaging over a season 7.25 cents a bushel, compared with 8.5 cents a bushel to Montreal, via Fort Colborne.

The question will naturally occur to one: Why is the Canadian all-water route not able to compete under present conditions on equal terms with the State Barge Canal, and why so much grain that should flow down the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec is despatched by rail to American North Atlantic ports? The reason in so far as the State Barge Canal is concerned is obvious; it lies in the ability of the steamboat operator on this waterway to obtain return cargoes and thus equalize his costs, there being an enormous up-canal movement in sulphur, ore concentrates, rubber, stone, and other bulk products.

Another reason is to be found in the myriad lines that connect New York and the American North Atlantic ports with practically every important port of the world. The ships of these lines are engaged primarily in the transportation of passengers, and the freight they carry is mostly of a valuable character, the luxuries that a rich country like the United States can afford to import. Frequently, they can obtain no return cargo, and to conform with marine loading laws have to be ballasted. Grain constitutes the ideal ballast, and in pre-war years it was no uncommon thing for transatlantic vessels to carry it for nothing, and at rare intervals actually to pay for ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the privilege of doing so. Then we must remember that the United States is a great manufacturing country, and must import large quantities of rubber, ore, nitrates, wool, and other raw materials, which means that tramp vessels are practically always on hand at American ports.

In shipping to Buffalo, also the grain owner can hold his grain in storage until it is sold, with the advantage of a number of alternative American routes, and still, if he deems it advisable, send his grain to Montreal, Sorel, or Quebec via the Welland Canal. Grain shipped to Port Colborne, on the other hand, must be sent to a St. Lawrence port, having no alternative route at all,

Of late, too, there has been the vexed question of congestion at Montreal, which has more than doubled the time of the average voyage to this port, and seriously interfered with both the earnings and operating efficiency of the inland lines engaged in this trade.