

## School and College Directory

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## A War-time Wool Riddle

The following has been received from one familiar with the wool situation in Eastern Canada. It is especially interesting as showing the attitude of the eastern textile manufacturers toward Canadian wool producers:

Editor Guide:—Wool has earned tremendous prominence in the domestic and foreign markets during the war period. Its price has soared. Its quantities have lowered. The British authorities will not permit the manufacture of complete woollen goods; the manufacturers must add 40 per cent. cotton. The prospects of a third winter's warfare, with all that it means to the warring nations, adds zest to the demand for wool. Prices will go still higher.

These wartime conditions have precipitated a peculiar if not unfortunate condition of affairs in the wool trade of Canada. With no authoritative hand to take hold of the situation, the opposing forces have clashed to a more or less degree. The producer refuses to sell to the textile manufacturer because the latter refuses to pay the price the first party demands. The Canadian government have made almost frantic appeals to the British government to release wool from the Australasian market to keep the textile industries moving in Canada, while about 97 per cent. of the Canadian wool clip is shipped to the United States. There is a lot to be said on both sides, as there are two sides to all arguments, but when the facts are sifted and the Canadian wool situation faced, there appears to be only one conclusion to come to: the immediate expropriation of the whole Canadian wool clip by the Dominion government, as the Imperial authorities have been permitted to do in Australasia and South Africa—and the sale of the clip effected in a manner that will net a fair price to the grower and an equally fair price to the user. If this is not done there is a possibility of the loss of the Australasian wool supplies to the Canadian market. A prominent Australian official paid a very quiet visit to Toronto recently; his presence was only known to about six people. He very quickly became aware of the situation, and intimated that it would only be the fair thing for him to acquaint the Australian government of what is happening here. The result will most probably be this: The Australian government may communicate the facts to the British government and urge the unfairness of a condition which forces the Australian wool growers to send wool to Canada for 15 pence (30 cents) while the Canadian growers get up to 63 cents by sending their clip abroad.

A continuance of the present condition of affairs is fraught with more serious consequences to the Canadian sheep industry and textile industries than perhaps can be imagined. If the Australian market is closed to Canada as a result of the investigations now being made by the Australian government, what will happen to these Canadian manufacturing concerns? Where will prices go? Will any benefits accrue to the Canadian wool-growing industry? Recently the following despatch appeared in the newspapers: "Calgary's big association wool sale closed with the highest record in prices ever paid any association. The top price reached 74 cents; the average for the 150,000 pounds was 60 cents. Last year's average was 29.2 cents; in 1915 27.79 and in 1914 19 cents." Never in the history of Canadian commerce were such prices obtained and the whole lot went to Boston, while the Canadian manufacturers are getting their supplies from Australasia.

Why will not the Canadian manufacturers pay the same price for Canadian wool foreign buyers are willing to pay? This question was recently put to the representative of the Canadian textile men, who said: "The Canadian manufacturers cannot afford to pay that price as the wool is not worth it to them." He urged that the lack of proper combing facilities in the Dominion precluded the users from working up all portions of the fleece. Furthermore that the grades of wool developed in Canada are not so suitable

for manufacture as the Australasian qualities, and therefore not worth any more than is paid for the imported wool."

"We can get super-qualities from Australia up to 70 s," declared this manufacturer, "while the best obtainable does not rank, on an average, higher than 64's. The Australasian 70's laid down in Canada on a clean scoured basis cost \$1.40. The Canadian 64's cost \$1.30. The difficulty confronting us is this: All the rest of the world's markets have been restricted, while the Boston market is kept open for competition and much profiteering takes place; therefore Western men object to any move that might be taken to restrict wool to the Canadian market, even for war purposes. To my mind there is a vast difference between the attitude of the Australian and South African sheep men and that of the Western sheep men. If they would produce the wool we require we would enter the competition for their supplies, but they do not, and we have no alternative but to apply to the Canadian government for assistance in getting Australasian wools to Canada and keep out of the Canadian wool market."

Antagonisms towards the "Protectionist East," the fear that the textile men want to restrict the wool market and force an unwarranted reduction in prices, the alleged indifference on the part of the Canadian manufacturers for the welfare of the Western sheep men, and their refusal to acknowledge the requests of the sheep men to have Canadian buyers go west to inspect the clips, are all arguments or reasons used by wool-growers' associations and departments of agriculture why the wool growers do not wish to have any contact with the Eastern manufacturers, much to the detriment of two important phases of Canada's industrial life.

#### The Growers' Argument

After personal conversation with some of the best informed Canadian sheep men of Eastern and Western Canada, it can be briefly stated that sheep men do not want to have any business relations with the manufacturers except on a basis of open and international competition, and the Western sheep men will fight to the last limit any attempt to place an embargo on the exportation of wool, and the blame for this is placed with the manufacturers by the wool growers.

"We would much rather dispose of our wool in Canada," declared Mr. J. H. Evans, Acting Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Manitoba, to the writer. "This year I personally wrote to every mill and commission house handling wool in the Dominion of Canada. I received less than 10 acknowledgements and not a single offer to purchase wool. I believe, and the prices paid for wool would indicate, that my assumption is correct, that there is a grave shortage of wool in Canada today and that it is badly needed for keeping our boys at the front in clothing. If the Manitoba farmers were assured that the wool was going to benefit the boys, a restriction of price would meet little criticism. But I fail to see what benefit an embargo would be. It would materially prevent the farmer from receiving the benefit from higher prices prevailing in the United States, would offer no guarantee that the wool would be utilized for war material and would be a temptation to undue profiteering in our own dominion. The wool gathered by this department has been offered to the highest bidder, regardless of the source of the offer. If the United States are able to outbid the Canadian buyers, the department, under existing conditions, has no alternative other than to sell to the latter."

Livestock Commissioner W. F. Stevens, of the Department of Agriculture, Alberta, states that the Alberta wool growers refuse to be restricted to a narrow market. He argued the sheep men's case this way: "Prior to the removal of the duty on Canadian wool by the United States government, the sheep ranchers of Southern Alberta had many years' experience in marketing their wool for from two to four cents



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