

The Frozen Meat Trade in 1916

It is Prophesied that the Import of Wheat by the United Kingdom will Show Great Decrease in 1917

The agricultural returns for 1916, in the United Kingdom, revealed an unexpected increase in the number of cattle and sheep and that Great Britain imported much less meat than in 1915. The totals all round were 2.3% above those of 1915, and in respect of cattle were the highest ever recorded. The high prices of meat must have more than counterbalanced the increased cost of feeding stuffs and labor, with the result that stock-raising must have been a profitable business during the past two years, in the British Isles.

Authorities in the grain trade here prophesy that what happened in the frozen meat trade in 1915 may easily happen in the case of wheat in 1917 as the British Government expects to raise 100,000,000 bushels of wheat during the present year and is cultivating every available acre of land with that end in view.

The following report of the frozen meat trade of the world during 1916 has been taken from the annual review of the frozen meat trade issued by W. Wedel and Company, London, England.

"Trading under Government control in 1915 was an experiment. In 1916 it became a habit. The entire production of Australia and New Zealand, and a large proportion of the River Plate outputs were purchased outright by the Government, chiefly for army requirements. A year ago there was no alternative left for frozen meat traders but to accommodate themselves to the changed conditions; and this is just what both importers and retailers succeeded in doing during 1916—though not without much loss and hardship in many cases. That the disabilities arising out of the change should have fallen upon British shoulders almost entirely, while the foreign firms engaged in the trade enjoyed a spell of exceptional prosperity, may have been accidental, or it may be considered only natural, under the circumstances; but, none the less, it provided matter for frequent and critical comment. Values, on average, were distinctly higher than in 1915, more especially in the case of home-fed meats.

Diversion of Supplies.

"The estimated supply of home-killed and imported beef, mutton and lamb together, was 1,677,548 tons, or only 150,000 tons less than in 1915, the heaviest year recorded; but inasmuch as large quantities—fully equal to that reduction—were diverted last year to the British armies on the Continent and elsewhere, it is fairly evident that the nation as a whole is eating practically the same amount of meat as in peace time.

"The increased quantities of frozen beef thus diverted from the British market in order to supply the armies of the Allies can hardly fail to bring about satisfactory developments from the producers' point of view, seeing that the greatly extended outlets thus created and established are likely to facilitate the sale of frozen meat on the Continent, when trade becomes normal again. This extension of trade was only rendered possible by additions having been made to the French and Italian refrigerated fleets. Apart from supplying army requirements, these importations served the useful purposes of conserving the flocks and herds, and checking any tendency to undue inflation of prices, in France and Italy.

"Freight continued to be short, despite the vast fleets of British and foreign refrigerated steamers now afloat. Their combined cubic capacity was equal to carrying more than twice the quantity of meat actually shipped last year; but army transport requirements, limitations of storage, accidents, unavoidable delays, and the demands of other trades, prevented anything like the full powers of these steamers being utilized for importing meat.

Shortage of Tonnage.

"Until the available supply of tonnage can still be further increased, or existing methods of loading modified, the recommendation made in the interim report of the committee on food prices, issued in September, to the effect that efforts should be made to foster the erection of additional refrigerating plant in Brazil, etc., is beside the mark. The main difficulty is not supplies, but transport. There are freezing plants now standing practically idle, solely because more steamers are not available; and the existing plants in the Argentine Republic, Uruguay, and Patagonia are not being utilized to more than two-thirds of their aggregate capacity.

"The total receipts of all kinds of frozen and chilled meat imported into the United Kingdom in 1916 were only 533,811 tons, as against 662,925 tons in 1915, and 694,427 tons in 1914. The Board of Trade valuations of these arrivals were £36,484,143 in 1916, as

compared with £39,576,930 in 1915, and £30,059,527 in 1914.

"The world's export output of frozen and chilled beef, mutton and lamb in 1916 is estimated at 915,380 tons, as against 881,075 tons in 1915, and 890,375 tons in 1914, thus leaving 381,560 tons, 218,150 tons, and 105,948 tons, respectively, to represent the exports to countries other than the United Kingdom.

"Importations of frozen mutton from all sources in 1916 amounted to 4,192,298 carcasses, as compared with 6,463,368 carcasses received in the previous year—a decrease of 2,271,070 carcasses, or 35.1 per cent. Australian supplies were reduced by no fewer than 1,908,993 carcasses, or 88 per cent, and New Zealand by 420,107 carcasses, while South America sent a slight increase of 3,231 carcasses. From the United States 56,866 carcasses were received, as against 2,550 carcasses in the previous year.

Receipts of Meats.

"Arrivals of lamb during the year totaled 4,280,438 carcasses against 5,727,993 carcasses in 1915, a shrinkage of 1,447,555 carcasses, or 25.2 per cent. Australia was responsible for a reduction of 1,002,030 carcasses and New Zealand for 666,868 carcasses. There was an increase of 196,614 carcasses from South America, made up of 130,378 carcasses from Argentina and 82,970 carcasses from Patagonia, less a decrease of 16,734 carcasses from Uruguay. It is some years since any frozen lamb was received from the United States, but last year 24,709 carcasses came to hand from that source.

"Adding mutton and lamb together the importations amounted to 8,472,736 carcasses—a reduction of 3,718,625 carcasses, or 30.5 per cent on the total for 1915.

"The imports of frozen beef in 1916, amounting to 3,346,188 quarters, fell short of the 1915 total of 4,113,265 quarters by 767,077 quarters, or 18.6 per cent, but were appreciably greater than in any earlier year. Decreases have to be recorded of 551,781 quarters from Australia, 475,671 quarters from the Argentine Republic, and 8,875 quarters from Uruguay. On the other hand, there were increases of 157,452 quarters from New Zealand, and 111,798 quarters from 'other countries,' which comprise the United States, Brazil, Canada and South Africa.

"The past year's importations of chilled amounted to 1,139,522 quarters, or 379,318 quarters less than the number received in 1915. Argentina, Uruguay and the United States reduced their exports of this article by 209,656 quarters, 65,528 quarters and 85,330 quarters, respectively, while Brazil sent 9,937 quarters more than in 1915."

CONDITIONS IN THE BOOT AND SHOE TRADE.

Exceptionally Good Sales Reported and Great Scarcity of Rubbers Owing to Labor Shortage.

It is reported that the high cost of living has affected the boot and shoe trade of the United States. But that does not seem to be the case in Canada and local retailers when informed of the report that sales were lower across the border, expressed surprise.

"We certainly do not find any falling off," said Mr. Fred. J. McCann, Manager of Goodwin's Shoe Department, "but on the contrary are doing twice the business of other years and the big trouble is to get shoes at reasonable prices. The railway situation is bothering us considerably, some shipments from up in Ontario being delayed five and six weeks. Rubbers are a big difficulty, the trouble being shortage of labour; raw material is plentiful but the factories find they can't get girls to do the work."

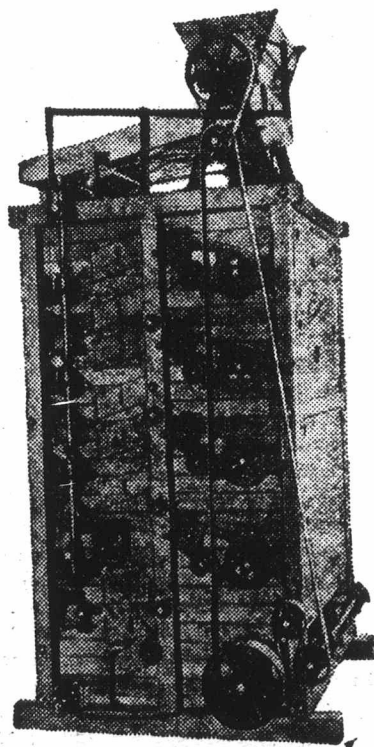
Mr. Machin, of Geo. G. Gales Company, reported an exceptional trade for this time of year. "Undoubtedly," he said, "people are buying as an investment rather than from necessity. Boots are going to go higher and the public are laying in supplies. Repair shops are doing an abnormal business—the largest in years because people now have repaired footwear, that they formerly would have thrown away. Rubbers are worn out and not discarded when they become smooth as formerly. We have more trouble getting rubbers than we have getting boots."

The Manager of the Brockton Shoe Co., Ltd., also reports a good brisk trade. "People are buying ahead of time," he declared, "I notice also that the boots left here by customers as useless are much more worn and repaired than was the case before the war. Boots are now worn till they simply have to be replaced."

Whether the present demand is one which will continue is another question. None of the dealers wished to express any opinion but the idea seemed to prevail that the good business of today would have to be subtracted from the ordinary trade of tomorrow, the Spring sales in all probability will be comparatively small.

FROM LONDON TO NEW YORK.

Officials of the province of Ontario are considering repurchasing \$17,600,000 Ontario bonds outstanding in London with proceeds of the new dollar issue in New York.



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