

## Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

The conditions in the West could scarcely be more favorable with regard to weather than they have been since seeding started. The Manitoba Free Press's first fortnightly crop report appeared on the 16th, and the 120 points heard from indicated that seeding was making very rapid progress under favorable conditions.

The labor supply has proved better than was first anticipated, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the labor supply has been materially helped out by the early season. The first detailed report of the seeding operations for 1917 was out on May 15th, this year it was published one month earlier, which makes an enormous difference. There is a considerable amount of new land being bought by the farmers, and many tractors are being purchased over and above the ones offered by the Government.

To revert to the labor situation, and the new regulations with regard to drafting men may materially alter this supply, but at least, the bulk of the wheat will be in before there is any further drafting. There is no doubt that the Order-in-Council making idleness a crime, has had its effect in making, particularly the foreign element, more willing to take a job. The average wage being paid in Manitoba is \$60 a month and board, and in Saskatchewan and Alberta, the average will run a little higher. The difficulty of securing help for the farm kitchens is as great as ever, in fact, help for the farmers' wives is chiefly conspicuous by its absence. The railway companies have been adding to the difficulties by refusing, up to the present time, to give the "one cent a mile" rate to women coming from Eastern Canada to the farm houses of the West.

Considered by provinces, the amount of seeding of wheat done on April 15th, was 65 per cent. in southern Manitoba, and 25 per cent. in the north. In Saskatchewan, it is a little more difficult to strike an average, but taking the province as a whole, between 25 and 30 per cent. was seeded up to the night of April 15. In Alberta, between 50 and 60 per cent. of the wheat was seeded in the south by the night of April 15th, this means, 50 to 60 per cent. of the largest wheat area. In the north, from 10 to 15 per cent. was seeded.

With regard to the increased acreage, the reports vary very widely. In Manitoba the increase will certainly not be more than 10 per cent., if it runs as high as that. The biggest increase will be in Saskatchewan, and there, possibly the increase will run to 25 per cent., but this is problematic. In Alberta, the increase will be somewhere round 20 per cent. These increases apply to wheat acreages only. The supply of moisture is very fair indeed, and

since the report came out, there have been general rains, not heavy, but warm, gentle rains, lasting from six to ten hours.

There will be a large amount of new breaking, particularly in Saskatchewan and Alberta, some points showing an increase from 3,000 to 5,000 acres, and in northern Manitoba there will be a great deal of breaking done, but it will not be of the spectacular whole section variety, but practically every farmer will break fresh land from 25 to 100 acres, which will aggregate many thousands of acres before the season is over.

In the vicinity of Winnipeg, a new scheme is being tried. One of the municipalities just on the edge of the city contains a large amount of land, which has never been brought under cultivation. Just before the war part of this municipality was purchased by a land company and re-sold in lots running from five acres to fifty acres. It is beautiful virgin prairie soil, and adjoins the farm of the Manitoba Agricultural College. The real estate man who had the most to do with the sale of this property conceived the happy idea that it would be very easily cultivated by the Agricultural College staff if a lease could be obtained, and he set himself to the task of securing the consent of the 200 odd owners of the property. The area involved is 700 acres. In less than a month's time he had the consent of all the owners, who appointed him their agent to make the lease. The land is leased to the Agricultural College for a term of three years, absolutely free, and the college has to turn in to the Red Cross fund of Manitoba every dollar of the net profit derived from the crops of this land. There are many thousands of acres of vacant land within a radius of 20 miles of Winnipeg, and there is no finer land in all the West, and it is being urged from many sources that schemes be devised for getting this land under cultivation. Its nearness to the city would make it possible to utilize more or less temporary help in its cultivation.

### OPEN MARKET FOR WOOL.

A report from Ottawa that the representatives of the manufacturers and producers of wool in conjunction with the War Board have come to an agreement whereby the wool growers will retain their open market to the south, is good news to the West. The regulation that the wool must first be offered to the Canadian manufacturers, is all right, now that we have a Dominion-wide Co-operative Wool Growers' Association. That organization will be fully in touch with American prices, and will be quite capable of seeing to it that the manufacturers pay what is right, or the wool goes over the line.

war profits to their side of the world. Within six months, however, the Imperial Government had taken complete control of Australian and New Zealand exports and had also secured 80 per cent of the Argentine output for army purposes at quite a moderate level of prices — in both cases at much under what was current in this market. From that time to this they have retained possession of three-fourths of all the imported meat. Argentine shippers have certainly made handsome profits on their reduced civilian shipments; but no profit-earning of any kind has been possible to importers of Australian and New Zealand meat for nearly three years past. These traders have indeed been heavily hit, losing practically the whole of their business. The 'profiteers' in Australasian meat have been the British Government, who retain the profit on any surplus supplies not required for the army. The entire Patagonian output of mutton and lamb for 1917 was also taken over by the Government on a similar basis. If the Government had revealed frankly its own share in the trade, and if the press had not been so unduly assertive about an imaginary grievance, the public would never have become so dissatisfied as they are on this point.

"So far as wholesalers and retailers are concerned the position is that, with greatly curtailed turnover, it is not possible to reduce fixed charges and labor so as to leave a margin of net profit corresponding in any degree with the advance in prices to the consumer. The position is now really serious for the whole trade, and complaints are rife as to the heavy losses incurred in carrying on, mainly for the sake of holding together long established connections in the hope that better times will come soon. Unless larger margins are allowed in the fixing of prices by the Food Controller, in order to cover working expenses, the country may be faced presently with greater difficulty in the distribution of its meat supplies.

### STATUS OF IMPORT TRADE.

"No 'free' market for imported meats existed during the greater part of the past year. The fixing of maximum prices — both wholesale and retail — tended to make distribution largely a matter of accountancy in many cases, although the methods adopted by the Government involve more labor than formerly, not less. Australian and New Zealand beef was entirely absent from the market, while mutton and lamb from both these sources were sold throughout at the same maximum prices. Patagonian sheep and lambs also were strictly controlled in price. The 'free' meats which were marketed comprised the civilian imports from the Argentine Republic and Uruguay (consisting of chilled beef, frozen mutton and lamb), also limited quantities of United States, Canadian, South African and Brazilian frozen beef, but these also were all subjected to the maximum price orders.

"On the average, prices were again higher than in the preceding year, not so much because supplies were less than usual as because consumption on the part of the classes earning high wages was beyond the normal. The average of quotations over the whole year was 24 per cent. higher than in 1916, despite the action of successive Ministers of Food in fixing maximum prices at levels lower than would have been arrived at on a free market. These certainly checked the advancing tendency, whatever other less satisfactory results may be ascribed to the adoption of that policy.

"The quantities imported of each description are not known exactly, but in aggregate they were about 550,000 tons, or 3 per cent. more than in 1916. They compare with 533,811 tons in 1916, 662,925 tons in 1915 and 694,427 tons in 1914.

"The world's export output of frozen and chilled beef, mutton and lamb in 1917 is estimated at 965,000 tons, as against 915,370 tons in 1916, 881,075 tons in 1915 and 800,375 tons in 1914 — a steady rate of expansion which must be considered very satisfactory under war conditions. From these yearly totals about 386,009 tons, 381,569 tons, 218,150 tons and 105,948 tons, respectively, were diverted to markets other than the United Kingdom.

"Despite all the risks and vicissitudes of overseas traffic during 1917, the fleet of refrigerated steamers under the British flag was well maintained, the total carrying capacity of the numerous steamers fitted for the transport of frozen and chilled meat being greater at the end of the year than it was at the beginning. Although 965,000 tons were shipped from the world's freezing works to the world's markets as compared with 915,380 tons in 1916, there was a certain margin of British refrigerated space to come and go upon; and, besides that, there were the insulated fleets of France and Italy, which are now quite considerably to augment the reserve of carrying power."

## British Meat Trade in 1917

Much Discontent Reported to Have Been Caused by "Control."

Criticism of Government control is a feature of the annual review of the frozen meat trade issued by W. Weddel and Co., Ltd.

"It is unusually difficult to present a commercial review of the frozen meat trade for 1917," says the statement, "because, throughout, there was so little freedom of trading in overseas supplies, except in the case of the curtailed imports from the River Plate. More or less complete control of all classes of meat by Government departments was gradually substituted for individual trading. Production, importation and distribution each went through a process of reconstruction by means of official restrictions, and consumption, after many half-hearted attempts to regulate it by persuasion, is about to be controlled also.

"Most of the numerous orders issued by the Government to the farmer operated in restraint of his liberty of action rather than in the direction of encouraging production to the utmost; and failed to secure the results hoped for by those who issued them. Prices were fixed on lines which led to the premature marketing of stock, increased consumption, and a subsequent shortage of meat.

"Alterations and repairs to the delicately balanced mechanism of trade were undertaken in good faith by men of undoubted experience in the various spheres of activity in which they were engaged before the war; but, who, being without full knowledge,

sometimes without any knowledge, of the inner workings of the machinery now placed in their hands, and being too much occupied to take time to consult the advisory committees which they had selected to advise them, have, in the main, evolved chaos out of order. Their ultimate aim is, apparently, to feed the whole nation on the principles which govern army rationing, instead of by intelligent business methods. The old distributing machinery has been scrapped, and the new is not yet in working order — hence local shortages, inequitable distribution, undesirable queues, and, as a natural result, much discontent.

### "GOVERNMENT ONLY PROFITEER."

"By 'profiteering' is presumably meant making larger net profits than in peace time; but it has never been clearly defined by those who, when using the word, intend to charge someone with doing something unpatriotic during war-time.

"It may be accepted that, immediately after the outbreak of war, there was considerable 'profiteering' in the sense stated above on the part of importers and traders. Everyone was then in great uncertainty as to what should be done, and everyone, seller and buyer alike, acted on impulse. So soon as any rise was established here, producers in Australasia and South America raised their selling prices and thus diverted