

# The Western Crops This Year

Northern Alberta will produce exceptionally fine seed oats this year.—Farmers are worried over possibility of transportation congestion when movement starts

BY E. CORA HIND

Winnipeg, September 15th, 1920. — Yesterday I issued the seventeenth Annual Crop Estimate for the Manitoba Free Press, placing the yield of wheat at 248,745,000 bushels, oats 352,109,000 bushels, barley 47,564,000 bushels, flax 7,152,000, rye 8,912,000, or a grand total for the five cereal crops of 664,482,000 bushels. This estimate was based on a personal inspection of the crops, which covered 47 days of continuous travel including some thousands of miles by train and 3,217 by motor, in the course of which scores of fields were examined and sampled. A daily diary was kept in which was recorded the writer's estimate of yield for the districts covered that day. Finally this estimate was checked against a report from the local correspondents of the Free Press at 240 points throughout the west.

The writer's journeys crosscut the three provinces from south to north, and very nearly from east to west, and while every district was not personally inspected, it is safe to assume that there is no condition under which crops were produced during the present year which was not inspected. The yields of wheat by provinces were as follows:

Manitoba 2,687,000 acres at 17 bushels	
per acre . . . . .	45,679,000
Saskatchewan 9,440,000 acres at 14½	
bushels per acre . . . . .	136,680,000
Alberta 3,494,000 acres at 19 bushels	
per acre . . . . .	66,386,000

This gives a total acreage in wheat of 15,621,000. In Alberta an allowance of 150,000 acres was made for the areas blown out on the 8th of June last. The total acreage in oats in the three provinces is 9,919,000 acres. It will be seen from this that the total oat yield of 352,109,000 is not a large crop, though it is by a number of millions the largest crop yet produced in the west, exceeding the banner crop of 1915 by something like 17,000,000 bushels.

The average yield for the provinces was 33 bushels in Manitoba, 35 in Saskatchewan, and 38 in Alberta. Speaking broadly, the oat crops in the north of all three provinces were very good, but in the south and centre, many yields were light owing to the fact that oats were seeded late and were caught by the dry spell at the last of June but also, a good many of the light crops are to be attributed to the use of poor seed.

This year, parts of Saskatchewan and Manitoba were visited by a frost on the 20th of August, and some of the later oat crops were effected by this first, but in Northern Alberta where an unusually large acreage was seeded to oats, there was no frost up to the 9th day of September, and this half of Alberta will be in a position to furnish an exceedingly fine sample of seed oats.

The barley crops varied very widely. Manitoba has more than double the acreage of any other province in barley, and some of these crops are yielding as high as 65 bushels to the acre, but on the other hand, in the extreme south there are very light crops, and in the extreme north some of the late crops were caught by frost, so that the average is not likely to be over the estimate of 30 bushels. Saskatchewan's average for barley is placed at 25 bushels, and Alberta at 23 bushels. Up to the present, Alberta has always regarded barley as purely a feed chop for local consumption, and not much attention has been given to its production.

Of all the crops grown this year in the West, flax is the most unsatisfactory. The acreage is placed at 1,178,000 for the three provinces. This is using the Dominion Government's figures, and many thousands of acres of this crop will not yield a sufficient amount to pay for the cost of production and threshing. A good deal of the trouble may be laid to the seeding of flax on new breaking. These crops are almost invariably weedy and germinated very unevenly, it being a common thing to see a field with patches of fully ripened flax and patches of flax just in bloom, and this is sure to make for an uneven sample. In northern Manitoba and southern Alberta are to be found the cleanest and most even flax crops, but these are very few in number.

Having ascertained by an estimate, the amount of crop, the next question is its value, and on this opinions are very widely varied, but figuring it on the closing price for October options on the day that the estimate was made, and taking the price for wheat on No. 2 Northern, on oats at No. 3 C.W., Barley at No. 4 C.W., and Flax at No. 3 C.W., and Rye at No. 3 Rye, the total value would be a little over a billion dollars. As there is no fixed price this year for wheat, the actual returns may fall somewhat below these figures, but in any case, it is an extremely valuable crop.

There has been a little broken weather in Saskatchewan and Manitoba which has interfered with threshing in some districts, but on the whole, the season so far has been favorable, and this will make for a very good grade of all grains.

## Transportation.

The farmers are much worried over the possibility of congestion in the movement of grain. The present price of wheat is high, and there will be a tendency to market as quickly as possible, and elevators will fill rapidly, and in view of the fact that coal this year must be carried east instead of west the outlook is not of the most encouraging. The Canadian National Railways, in either main line nor branches, has never rejoiced in a very good road bed. During the years of the war, very little was done to improve any Railway, and certainly the lines of the Canadian National, over which the big coal trains must be hauled, is very far from being satisfactory. The Grand Trunk Pacific on the other hand had a splendid road bed to start with, and very little work is necessary to bring it up to a high degree of efficiency. While a good deal of grain can be diverted from the Canadian National lines to the Grand Trunk Pacific, there is little or no possibility of diverting coal along this line.

## Alberta

The great bulk of coal from northern Alberta must come from the Rosebud Valley, that is, from the Drumheller and Rosedale mines. The Canadian National is the only road with a feasible right of way into this valley. Its grade is a very bad one, and its line of rail, known as the Goose Lake line should have heavy rails laid its entire length, if it is to stand the heavy traffic necessary for the movement of any large amount of coal; of course, coal from the Galt and Taber mines will come over the Canadian Pacific Railway, and some coal can be hauled from Edmonton, but the Rosebud Valley is one of the chief sources of supply, and as already stated, the Canadian National Railway have the only feasible right of way into it.

Of course the present condition of the Government Railways must not be laid down as a sample of Government operated roads. They took over the lines in bad condition, but when all allowances are made for the existing difficulties, no one can travel on the Canadian Pacific Railway and then pass to the Government lines without at once feeling the different atmosphere which prevails. On the one Railway everything is at concert pitch, on the other, there is already apparent the inevitable leisureliness of Government employees, and this is a far more serious matter than the general public can conceive of. A District Superintendent on the Canadian Pacific Ry, during the tremendous grain rush of 1915, put the case very concisely when he said that if a call boy delayed ten minutes in the calling of a freight crew, it was felt from Winnipeg back to the Rocky Mountains; in other words, if anything like the necessary work is to be accomplished, every Official from President down to call boy must be on the jump, and if they are not, then congestion ensues.

## Cost of Ties.

Speaking about putting roadbeds in order, an interesting item came to light recently in connection with the destruction of tie timber by fire. It seems that so much of this timber has been destroyed by forest fires in the last few years that the Railways are obliged to bring the bulk of their ties from British Columbia, and what are only second grade ties, today cost from a \$1.35 to \$1.45 to lay per tie. As there are 3,000 ties in a mile of railway, this is some bill of expense. The writer has a very vivid recollection of a time, possibly 25 years ago when ties contractors were very glad to get contracts for number 1 tamarack ties delivered at the Railway, for 7c. a piece. This item alone will give a key to what it costs to maintain a roadbed in first class condition.

## Higher Rates.

Somebody will claim that this argument in favor of the recent advance in the freight rates, but it is nothing of the kind. The writer has no more sympathy with the way in which the Government has handled the freight rate increase than have the Board of Trade, the United Farmers, or any other organization in the West which has to do with the movement of freight. It is highly probable that all the protesting that the West can do will be of no avail, but the West will continue to protest, and of that the East need have no manner of doubt.

## Tariff Inquiry.

The Tariff Inquiry opened here on the 14th and adjourned today to go further west. The case of the Organized Farmers was presented by Norman Lambert, Secretary for the Canadian Council of Agriculture, and part of the hearing here was devoted to the hearing of the case for those in favor of protection. Mr. Lambert was requested by Sir Henry Drayton to present further particulars when the Commission sits here on its return from the further West.

## Rural Credit.

The Rural Credit Loans for the province of Manitoba for the past eight months of 1920, amount to slightly more than \$2,000,000.00. It would seem to indicate that under the new system of the Government furnishing the money for these loans instead of the Banks, that the Rural credits has become even more satisfactory than it was under the old system.

Winnipeg, Manitoba.—Pulp resources in north-eastern Manitoba will constitute a large source of future supply according to the inspector of Dominion forest reserves who recently made a survey. He reports that a good quality of spruce is found which would make excellent pulp but there is no outlet at the present time for the finished article.