



THE GRAIN movement from the prairies through British Columbia ports, which has played such an important role in Pacific Coast sea commerce during the last few months, is likely to undergo important changes as a result of the recent stiffening of wheat and flour rates on shipments to the United Kingdom.

Wheat shipments through Vancouver so far this season have totalled about 3,000,000 bushels, and it is expected that a similar quantity is yet to be shipped. Most of the consignments were booked at from 33 to 36 shillings, but within the last few days the figure has jumped above 37 shillings, and it has been known to go over 42 shillings in at least one case. It is the general belief that the increase is due to the desire of the United States Shipping Board to force a conference on the Pacific and Atlantic, and it is probable that a conference will be held early in the spring to eliminate the present close figuring on cargoes and establish a more uniform rate.

The result of the increased rate is that the tramp steamer is likely to have a chance again in these waters after a protracted period of dulness. A big Japanese tramp freighter has been chartered to carry a 7,500 ton cargo to the United Kingdom, although it was impossible to obtain details. The total wheat bookings to date amount to 5,000,000 bushels. The consignments for the Orient amount to 59,200 short tons and for the United Kingdom, 78,600 long tons.

The Vancouver elevator system has been severely taxed and a few days ago a delegation of Vancouver business men went to Ottawa to urge that the facilities be augmented. During the last few months the Pacific Coast has become thoroughly aroused to an appreciation of what this grain business means, and a concerted effort will be made to strengthen British Columbia's position for future development. Prairie grain brokers predict that within a few years two-thirds of the wheat output of Alberta and Saskatchewan will pass through Vancouver for either the Atlantic seaboard and the United Kingdom or the Far East, which has developed into one of the country's most important markets.

The Pacific Coast has several distinct advantages over the Great Lakes route because the winter conditions in British Columbia at no time are severe enough to hamper freight shipments. The har-

bors are always open—even Prince Rupert, which is, by the way, making an agitation for the establishment of a grain elevator there at the terminus of the Canadian National Railway (G. T. P.). There is an easy gradient over the Canadian National (C. N. R.) to Vancouver and this fact is having its effect on freight rates. A delegation headed by G. G. McGeer, K. C., and Premier John Oliver, is now in Ottawa, fighting for a revision of the freight rates in respect of British Columbia, and if its efforts are successful there is little doubt that rail business to and from British Columbia will be substantially increased. Vancouver has an advantage over Prince Rupert in that it can receive shipments direct from the prairies. Vancouver compares more equally with Fort William in that respect, although Fort William is handicapped by being locked in ice during the winter. A movement is now on foot to have the government piers and elevator at Vancouver placed under joint control so that efforts to build up the grain trade may enjoy the benefits of unification.

Development of the Peace River country in northern British Columbia and Alberta will add to the flow of grain to Vancouver later on and preparations are being made with a view to ultimate accommodation for at least 100,000,000 bushels. The Alberta crop is now about 50,000,000 bushels and the Saskatchewan output averages 200,000,000 bushels. It is believed that all of Alberta's crop and at least half of Saskatchewan's could be advantageously handled through Vancouver. Deducting 25 per cent. of this natural volume to allow for seed and milling there would be 100,000,000 bushels that should flow to the coast.

While in the Federal capital the Pacific Coast delegation will urge that the Government continue the construction of the drydocks at Vancouver and Esquimalt, which were commenced under the Meighen administration, and also the Ballantyne pier in Vancouver. Although no definite report has so far been issued to the effect that these projects would be abandoned by the new government, unofficial advices indicated strongly that such was the intention and numerous protests from Victoria and Vancouver trade bodies have been sent to the government. Now that Hon. J. H. King, Minister of Public Works, has taken office, it is expected that a definite assurance will be forthcoming that the work will go on, as Dr. King is a

British Columbian and is thoroughly familiar with local conditions.

Shipping Pool Contemplated

A few weeks ago there appeared to be an atmosphere of hopefulness surrounding the proposal to form a shipping pool on the Pacific Coast to purchase and operate United States Shipping Board vessels out of San Francisco, Seattle, Portland and other ports. Now that the preliminaries are over and a thorough examination made of the conditions that would at once be encountered by the proposed organization, little enthusiasm remains and it appears to be freely admitted that there is no chance of bringing about such a pool, in the near future at any rate. After several days of conference in San Francisco, a deputation of prominent Coast shipping men headed by Herbert Fleischhacker and including such important figures as Captain Robt. Dollar and A. F. Alexander, president of the Pacific Steamship Company, went to Washington to discuss the plan with Chairman Lasker, of the shipping board. The Washington conference lasted two days, at the conclusion of which the deputation departed for the Coast without having reached a definite or even tentative agreement. The general impression is that the main cause of failure was the apparent impossibility of getting the factions representing the various port zones united. The shipping board, too, is hesitant about disposing of its passenger vessels, and Mr. Lasker told the deputation that it might take more than two months to determine the terms on which these ships would be released. The board is waiting to learn what Congress does with American shipping laws and subsidy proposals. In the meantime, Mr. Fleischhacker has appointed an organization committee to harmonize the various port interests, if this can be done. If Congress passes new laws more favorable to American shipping, the shipping board ships will naturally command a better price, and operators will be more anxious to buy them. The Coast deputation held that present laws hampered American shipping and that ships operating under foreign laws possessed an advantage impossible to overcome.

Negotiations are now under way to stabilize freight rates to and from the Orient. Rates are now in such a state that some of the operators are not even making expenses. Operators have been allowing volume of freight to determine the rate and for that reason shippers