

Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

Conditions in the West centre around seeding and labor supply. Weather for the former has been very good, and already quite a large percentage of seeding has been done, and a very great deal of the work on the land preparatory to seeding. The season is, fully three weeks in advance of last year, and this will, to some extent, solve the labor problem for seeding at least, although it is still very acute.

The Winnipeg Grain Exchange, with its allied interests among country elevator employees, has secured and sent out 300 men, of whom, possibly 40 per cent, have had some farming experience. The cards asking for volunteers have been distributed throughout all the industries in Winnipeg, but so far, the response, outside of the Grain Exchange, has been very limited. The Grain Exchange, it may be stated, has undertaken to pay the salaries of those going out on the farm, and therefore, the wages earned on the farm will be additional. Very few other employers appear to be able to do this. The City of Winnipeg will do it, but they have not very many men who could be spared.

There is a good deal of feeling that the government should be willing to pay the difference between what the man is earning in the city and what he can make on the farm. The average rate of wages for experienced men in the country is \$60.00 a month and board, and a few farmers pay as high as \$75.00, but inexperienced men cannot get so much, and as by far the larger proportion of the men who would go are married and have their homes, the question of board does not cover the situation, as their homes must be maintained in the city while they are in the country.

There has been a very good response from the boys for the "Soldiers of the Soil" movement, but the great majority of these boys are inexperienced, and are therefore, not so valuable for seeding as they would be in harvest time.

There is still a very strong feeling that the government should find some means of handling the foreign labor by employing them on the land. This is a terribly vexed question, and it might be met, to some extent, by a law similar to that passed in Virginia and New Jersey; a law compelling every man to have a job and work on it. At the present time there are hundreds of foreigners idling about and doing nothing, because they feel practically well assured that they can within a month or two at the height of the season, earn sufficient to live on for the balance of the year.

While the situation is serious with regard to outdoor help on the farms, it is even more serious with regard to help for the farm homes, for there is no doubt that at the present time fully 3,000 women could be placed in the farm kitchens of the prairies, if these women were forthcoming. The few women who are offering do not want to go into the kitchens, they want outdoor work, and there is little trouble in placing women who are willing to do outdoor work and have had some experience in handling horses.

FORDSON TRACTORS.

The first shipment of 1,000 Fordson tractors purchased by the Food Control Board for the purpose of increasing production is now being demonstrated on the prairie outside of Winnipeg and at the Agricultural College. These tractors are pronounced an entire success, and their ease of operation is a great factor in their favor.

MOVEMENT OF WHEAT.

It is estimated that there is still between 12,000,000 and 15,000,000 bushels of wheat in the farmers' hands, and all efforts are being concentrated on endeavoring to persuade the farmers to get this wheat out so that it can be moved to seaboard. The early opening of the seeding season is having a bad effect in the movement of the wheat, as farmers naturally are extremely anxious to spend every minute on the land, but the necessity of the allied countries is such that the movement of this wheat before the seeding is finished would appear to be absolutely essential.

PRICE OF WHEAT.

The Board of Grain Supervisors for Canada will meet here on April 4th for the consideration of a policy with regard to the handling of the crop of 1918, and will also consider the question of price. F. Riddell, general manager of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company, has been added to the Board to fill the place left vacant by the resignation of Hon. T. A. Crerar, now Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Riddell is a very young man, but is filling the difficult position of manager of this big organization with conspicuous success, and it is felt that he will add greatly to the strength of the Board.

FOOD REGULATIONS.

The very drastic regulations outlined by the Board of Food Control will be welcomed in the West, especially by those who have been endeavoring to stimulate conservation and substitution. An enormous amount of time and a great deal of food has undoubtedly been wasted, but even now very much can be done if these regulations are thoroughly enforced.

LIVESTOCK PRICES.

Prices of mutton and pork continue to soar, but the market for beef has been somewhat depressed during the week. Lambs on the hoof sold for 20c. a pound, and hogs are holding steady round \$20 to \$20.25 per cwt. There has been a very considerable movement of sows in pig, but this is due somewhat to the shortage of feed in certain districts. The farmers are marketing their sows and they are being purchased and moved in to other districts. Reports coming in indicate that the litters that have already arrived are of good size and in a fine healthy condition. There is good ground for believing that the hog production campaign has been productive of good results, and by November next there will be a heavy supply of pork for overseas.

MEAT SUPPLY INCREASED.

Suspension of the meatless day regulations for thirty days, beginning March 30 was ordered by the Food Administration, in instructions telegraphed to all state food administrators.

Temporary relaxation of the restrictions was decided upon because thousands of hogs now coming into the market has increased the meat supply beyond the country's shipping and storage capacity. In a statement announcing the order, Food Administrator Hoover expressed confidence that the producers would not take advantage of the "holiday" to ask more than fair prices, and that "the packers and retailers will have sense enough to realize that this is not to be a holiday of high prices."

HIDES AND LEATHER.

Many grades of raw hides are now being sold at pre-war time prices, but best heavy steer is still about half a cent per lb. higher than prices then prevailing. There is no great demand, but offerings are being freely taken up. Large quantities are being released by holders in the United States, partly, it is said, through fear of the inquisition of the Control Boards, partly from over-stocking, and partly because of the presence of warbles in the skins of the past season's slaughter. Good calf and kid skins are not cheaper, nor are they likely to be, as the best grades are of European origin, and are available in very small quantities. The raising of the United States embargo to Mexican tick infested cattle is not likely to have much effect on the local markets, and any accumulations which may be held will be absorbed by the market.

Horsehide substitutes are being used to an increasing extent for ladies' footwear and for soldiers' gloves.

The action of the British Government in placing boots and shoes on the market at a controlled profit, is a source of interest to Canadian manufacturers, but there is no present anticipation of interference with the trade in this country.

There is a possibility of some slight reduction in the price of footwear in the lower grades, but generally speaking, the lowering in the cost of leather is offset by the increase in the cost of cotton, steel, etc.

SEED SCARCE.

Many seedsmen are reporting a somewhat limited supply in hand. In fact, some varieties of various classes of seed are completely out of the market, and farmers and gardeners will find their supplies cut down 20 to 50 per cent. The luxury trade in bulbs and flowers is languishing, not only because the supplies from Europe are not available, but because the demand is decreasing.

Complaints of the high prices ruling are heard and accusations of speculation are rife. Naturally, with the limited supplies of seed and the increased cost of conducting business, prices are bound to be higher, but there can be no doubt that the seedsmen are in the great majority of cases acting with due regard to the welfare of the country. The unprecedented demand for seed, together with the smaller supplies, would permit of much higher prices being demanded. The need of increased production is obvious, and without adequate distribution, there would be danger of lessened acreage, and of inferior seed being used. Speculation at this hour, we believe, would be dealt with very promptly by the authorities.

Seedsmen complain that much seed is wasted by amateur gardeners who, when buying seed for a backyard lot, often get enough to stock several acres.

We quote the following prices of seed per 100 lbs.:

Clover seed:—			
Red Medium	.. . . .	\$44.25	\$44.75
Large Late Red	.. . . .	44.75	48.75
Elsike Clover	.. . . .	18.75	34.50
White Dutch Clover	.. . . .	35.75	63.25
Alfalfa	.. . . .	28.00	34.75
Grass Seed:—			
Timothy	.. . . .	13.75	18.00
Blue Grasses	.. . . .	20.00	27.00
Seed Corn, per bush.	.. . . .	4.75	9.15
Barley, per bus.	.. . . .	2.60	4.05
Beans	.. . . .	11.00	12.75
Buckwheat	.. . . .	2.55	3.15
Oats	.. . . .	1.80	2.25
Peas	.. . . .	5.65	6.40
Wheat	.. . . .	3.65	3.75
Seed Flax	.. . . .	5.00	.....
Fodder Plant Seed	.. . . .	7.75	22.75

WEEK'S RECORD OF ACTIVE MONTREAL STOCKS.

Sales.	Stocks.	Open.	High.	Low.	Last sales.	Net ch'ge.	Year Asked.	Bid.
260	Brazilian	34	36	34	36	+1	40	32
230	Can. Car	24	24 3/4	24	24 3/4	-2 1/2	27 3/4	18 1/2
380	Do. pref.	61 1/4	63	61 1/4	63	+1 1/2	65 1/2	49 1/2
100	Can. Cement	60	60 1/2	60	60 1/2	+ 1/4	61	*57
165	Can. Cottons	59 1/2	59 1/2	*58	*58	+ 1/2	59 1/2	48 1/2
215	Can. Steamship	39 1/2	39 1/2	39 1/2	39 1/2	- 1/2	42 1/4	39 1/4
402	Civic Power	73 3/4	74	73 3/4	74	- 1/4	75 1/2	68 1/2
3,146	Dom. Steel	*58 1/2	*60 1/2	*58 1/2	*60 1/4	+1 1/4	62	*53
110	Lyall	*65 1/4	*65 1/4	*65	*65	- 1/2	68	*62
170	Macdonald	15	15	15	15	unch.	16 1/2	13 1/2
175	Quebec Ry.	15	15 1/2	15	15 1/2	+ 1/2	19 1/2	15
170	Riordon	117 1/4	117 1/4	117 1/4	117 1/4	unch.	122	117 1/4
120	Spanish River	13	13	13	13	unch.	15	13
2,741	Steel of Canada	55 3/4	57 1/4	55 1/2	57 1/4	+1 1/4	58 3/4	*49 3/4
BANKS								
65	Merchants	167	167	167	167	unch.	*167	167
BONDS								
\$18,500	Can. Loan (1925)	93 3/4	93 3/4	93 3/4	93 3/4	- 1/4	95 3/4	93 3/4
10,300	Do. (1931)	92 1/2	92 1/2	92 1/2	92 1/2	- 1/4	93 1/2	92 1/2
38,600	Do. (1937)	91 1/4	91 1/4	91 1/2	91 1/2	- 1/4	92 1/2	91 1/2
18,000	Dom. Iron	84	84	84	84	unch.	84	84
UNLISTED SHARES								
1,140	Tram Power	24 1/4	24 1/4	23 3/4	24	- 1/2	33	23 3/4

*Ex-dividend