

The Erie Canal.

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these railroads in their efforts to reduce the cost of transportation.

The railroads have been constantly bettering their transportation facilities by improvements in their roadbeds, in the size, capacity and economy of their locomotives and cars, in their terminal facilities, and in the greater perfection of their organization for securing and doing business. The Erie canal has not kept pace with the march of improvement, and it may be asserted that conditions have been reversed and, whereas in former years the Erie canal forced down rail freight rates, that of late the railroads have forced the canal rates down to such an extent that under existing conditions of the canal there is little profit to boatmen, and the amounts carried are very limited. The canal to fulfil its highest functions, must continuously be improved, to keep pace with the railroad improvements, and these canal improvements should not drag along after the rail improvements but should precede them, or, at least be coincident with them.

The state of New York has appreciated this in providing for the improvements which are under way, with the \$9,000,000 appropriation, but, when these are accomplished, the demand will be for still more and greater improvements. When the current improvements are completed, it is fair to estimate that, with boats 115 feet long and drawing safely eight feet of water, in connection with the time which will be saved in lockage, the capacity of the canal will be increased fully 75 per cent; that is, a single boat of the large size can, in a single season transport 75 per cent more than one of the present type of boats can under existing conditions. The added expense for this additional amount transported will not exceed 25 per cent of the cost of transporting the smaller amount under the present conditions. This would reduce the net first cost of transporting a bushel of wheat from Buffalo to New York to about 71 per cent of the present cost, and if this present first cost is assured at 24c, during 1895 the average canal freight charge from Buffalo to New York was 22c per bushel varying from 3c to 19c, these being the lowest rates ever known, will, under the new conditions, with boats 115 feet long and drawing eight feet of water, be reduced to 17c.

If the capacity of the canal were still further increased, so that boats 24 feet wide could be used without any increase in draft beyond eight feet, the capacity of each boat for doing business would be increased to about 2.43 times the capacity of the single boat under the present conditions. Assuming that the increased cost of operating a 17½ foot boat for an equal number of trips, this would reduce the net cost of transporting a bushel of grain from Buffalo to New York to about 69 per cent of the present cost, or 1½c per bushel.

If the capacity of the canal were increased so that boats could be used without any increase in draft beyond eight feet, the capacity of each boat for doing business would be 3.02 times that of a boat under present conditions. Making proper allowances for increased cost of doing greater business, this would reduce the net cost of transporting a bushel of wheat from Buffalo to New York to about 59 per cent of the present cost, or 1½c per bushel. If the capacity of the canal were increased as above to provide for boats of 36 feet width its capacity would be increased 3.51 times and the cost of transporting a bushel of wheat reduced to 44 per cent of the present cost, or 1.11c per bushel.

It is believed that this could be still further reduced by deepening the canal and widening it where necessary; by bettering the terminal facilities; by a perfected organization which will labor to secure business and do away with delays at terminal points, and keep boats going continuously during the period of navigation and secure return freight to greatest possible extent, and by the total elimination of the mule as a motive power and the complete substitution thereof of steam and, possibly, of electricity. It is believed that the goal, the aim of all interested in the Erie canal, may well be to put the canal into such condition that it will be possible to transport wheat from Buffalo to New York at a cost of 1c per bushel and other articles in proportion. Such a cost I believe to be reasonably capable of attainment, and the enlargement of the locks, as estimated for herein would be a great and decided step thereunto.—Northwestern Miller

The Markets for Linseed and its Products.

The recent drop in domestic flaxseed, amounting to about 8 cents per bushel within a fortnight came rather unexpectedly, and is having a somewhat demoralizing effect upon the products. Extreme dullness in oil is a notable feature of the European markets, as well as our own, while the position of cake here is always a reflection of the conditions prevailing abroad. The Continental markets, according to latest reports, were in rather good shape, but those of Great Britain, to which American markets are most closely related, are in unsatisfactory condition, the tendency of prices in oil being steadily downward, while cake is unfavorably affected by the cheapness of grain feed stuffs.

The price of seed at London, as shown by latest reported sales, has declined to about the equivalent of \$1 per bushel for Calcutta and 89 cents for La Plata, the former afloat and the latter ex ship London. This, in the face of conditions which a few weeks ago were thought to point to a possible serious deficiency in the supply, is a depressing state of affairs. It is true that Argentine shipments have increased sufficiently to indicate less of a shortage there than was feared, but the Indian supply is very short, the shipments to United Kingdom and Continent since Jan. 1 being but 56,000 quarters, against 257,000 quarters for the same time last year. Meantime the Argentine shipments have been 630,000 quarters against 562,000 quarters last year, and the Russian shipments 375,000 quarters, as compared with 362,000; while North America, which is credited with no shipments during the early months of the year, contributed 33,000 quarters in the first eleven weeks of 1897. The shipments from all sources to Great Britain and the Continent to March 20 this year amounted to 1,095,000 quarters, against 1,191,000 quarters in 1896 and in the prevailing dullness it is evident that this deficiency of less than 8 per cent, is too small to produce the conditions that had been feared early in the year.

It will be seen from these figures that the probability of North American seed being wanted to any great extent during the present crop year is not at all encouraging. The late decline here would represent a cost on board at New York above the export line, and it is questionable whether any prices now in sight would be low enough, even with easy lake and canal rates, to meet the present basis abroad. American seed is offered at about 97 cents, ex-store London, but it is not saleable on that basis, and would have to be

laid down there to sell at about 90 cents ex-ship, to find a market. This would mean below 80 cents f. o. b. New York. —New York Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter.

Too Much Early Buying.

Every dry goods merchant writes a dry goods retailer to the Economist, "has no doubt noticed that the custom of early buying is increasing every year. Travelling salesmen start out to get orders from the retailer for goods at from four to six months before there is any demand for them by the consumer. The usual plea of the salesman is that if we do not place our orders at the time we shall not be able to get the goods when we need them. This may be true in case of jobbers and a few large retailers, but our experience has been that we could get all the goods we needed in almost any regular line of dry goods in ten to twenty days before the retail season opens for them. We know that we buy much more intelligently in regard to quantity, style and price in ten or fifteen days before we need the goods than we can six months before the season opens. The jobber of the manufacturer gives us long dating, which we appreciate very much, but is it not a fact that the early buying and long dating cause many of us to order ourselves, as the buying time and the selling time are so far apart? Most dry goods merchants are optimists, and always looking for a big trade in the future and anticipating greater things in the way of business than come to pass. We believe that if the buying time the selling time, and the paying time all came close together, it would make us more careful about quantity at least, and we would buy more in touch with the season and also with the wants of our customers. We believe it to be a fact that the great majority of dry goods merchants who have good credit or cash to buy with are overstocked all the year through."

Breadstuffs in Sight.

The aggregate supplies of breadstuffs in the United States and Canada on April 1, 1897, as reported to the Daily Trade Bulletin and the Minneapolis Market Record, exhibited a decrease during March of 10,994,000 bushels compared with a decrease of 14,692,800 bushels during February, and a decrease of 6,757,300 bushels during March 1896. There was a general shrinkage in supplies, especially at the Atlantic seaboard and in the Northwest. Where an increase has taken place it was due to the removal of round lots from the larger distributing points in the interior. The decrease in stocks of flour was marked—189,700 barrels—against an increase of 101,100 barrels during February, and a reduction of 23,000 barrels during March 1896. Supplies in New York, in the Northwest on the Pacific Coast and in Canada were slightly enlarged, while in all other sections, there was quite a marked decrease. In the South, stocks were materially reduced to some extent to large shipments to Newport News.

The aggregate supplies of breadstuffs in Europe and afloat therefor and in the United States and Canada on April 1, 1897, were equal 199,010,000 bushels, against 155,591,000 bushels on March 1, and 170,000 bushels on April 1, 1896. The decrease in the aggregate was equal 16,491,000 bushels, against a decrease of 17,892,800 bushels during February, and 11,257,300 bushels during March, 1896. The aggregate supplies are 41,618,800 bushels less than reported a year ago.—Chicago Trade Bulletin.