

Conditions in the West

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Stock**

Special Correspondence by E. CORA HIND, Commercial and Agricultural Editor, Free Press, Winnipeg, Man.

Winnipeg, October 13th—Attention has been very much concentrated on the wheat market. Not that it has done anything especially spectacular, but everyone is anxious as to the effect of the new order in Britain, appointing a commission to handle all the grain and control the mills and shipping. Practically ever since the order was made the only business that has been transacted in Winnipeg has been evening up of trades, and trading has been generally of a limited character. Today, a special cable indicates that the London Exchange at least does not anticipate any interference with Canadian business. There has been a very decided dread and following the British government, the Canadian government might commandeer grain, but so far nothing has been done along this line, and this cable message from Britain will to some extent restore confidence. If no action is taken by the Dominion government and the British government takes delivery of our grain at seaboard, it will not make much difference to regular trading, although it will probably materially curtail the speculative element in the market.

The announcement that Britain had secured neutral tonnage to move a large part of the Argentine crop to Britain was regarded in Winnipeg as a bear argument for our grain, but of course, it is too early to form any definite opinion as to what the effect will be.

Threshing Operations.

The weather has been fine all week, and threshing is going forward with fair activity, but there is a very acute shortage of men for threshing outfits. The leave of very many of the soldiers has expired and they are back in camp, and indeed not a few of them are under orders for overseas, while many of the Eastern harvesters who came up were men who could only be spared from their own homes for a given length of time, and when the snow came, a week ago, they decided that it was no use waiting and went home immediately. It is reported that in some districts where they are finding it impossible to thresh at present, that a large quantity of grain is being stacked, but even for this work there is a very keen shortage of labor. Receipts during the week have been running from 800 to 900 cars a day, with an increase as the week advances.

Flour and the High Cost of Living.

There has been no further change in flour prices during the week, in spite of the decline in wheat, and No. 1 patents is still quoted at \$9.00, and bread is 7 cents a loaf. Winnipeg and most of the western towns are very much stirred up on the question of the increased cost of living, and nothing is receiving more attention than the question of the price of flour and bread. It is understood that Winnipeg is considering to some extent the possibilities of municipal bakeries. The woman's organizations are getting together and making practical enquiries into the cost of both bread and flour. The C. P. R. employees are holding a mass meeting to talk the situation over and it has been mooted that the Provincial government may be requested to appoint experts to look into these matters. Possibly there is nothing more difficult at the present time than to arrive at any accurate information along these lines. Trade has so many ramifications and so many things enter into the cost, the standard of delivery and the care of food has become so much more elaborate than it was even a few years ago that it is impossible to say just how much a loaf of bread should cost. One thing which seems to have been pretty thoroughly proved is that the Winnipeg bakeries use practically no No. 1 flour in their bread; that frequently it consists of 25 per cent of No. 2 and 75 per cent of No. 3. Sometimes one-third of No. 2, one-third of No. 3 and one-third of No. 4. Let no one think that Winnipeg is not getting good bread. The bread is excellent and possibly the revelation of how it is produced may have some effect in proving to families that No. 1 Patents is not necessary for the making of good bread. The writer feels that in view of present war con-

ditions in Canada, possibly the only hope of reducing the cost of living is more economical housekeeping. As a nation, Canadians are very extravagant, in the matter of food, and while so many of our men are fighting in France, it would be a good thing if many of our women could acquire some of the French thrift in addition to their present skill in cooking.

The Dominions Royal Commission.

The Dominions Royal Commission sat in Winnipeg, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and a very great number of people appeared before them. They were given information on a great variety of topics, so much in fact that it will be remarkable if they do not suffer from mental indigestion, as presumably they got as much at every place as they did at Winnipeg. It must have been somewhat painful and embarrassing for Sir George Foster to find how eternally he ran up against the free trade question in the West. It was supposed to be tabooed, but it "would not down" no matter how carefully he endeavored to suppress it. It was especially in evidence with regard to the live stock business, and over and over again he was told that the only real market for heavy finished steers was at Chicago.

Commissioners Sinclair and Tatlow were especially keen on getting at the root of things, Commissioner Tatlow being especially strong on information with regard to operation of railways. One thing that was pressed home in a paper on the live stock question was the necessity of a proper agricultural survey of Western Canada, in order that its possibilities with regard to soil, water supply, etc., could be available for incoming and individual settlers. Also that some proper grasp would then be obtained on the amount of free pasturage which is going to waste in the West.

Some recent experiments by Mr. G. H. Hutton, Superintendent of the Dominion Experimental Farm at Lacombe, Alta., has laid emphasis on the value of native pasture, he having proved very conclusively that a section of land, fenced and with running water, will carry from 75 to 100 head of steers, and that two year old steers on such pasturage will make a gain of 350 pounds apiece during the summer season.

One whole day of the Commission was devoted to the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, its methods of operation and the general question of handling the grain in Western Canada. For this enquiry the South African delegate sat with the Commission, it being the first and only session which he attended in Winnipeg.

It is somewhat difficult to see what can come out of this commission which will be of benefit to Canada, but the information carried back to their own countries by the various commissioners may possibly result in closer trade relations. One cannot help feeling that at present an enormous amount of time is being wasted which should be actively applied in providing markets abroad for Canadian produce during the remainder of the war and when the war is over. The very word "commission" has come to be regarded in a somewhat doubtful spirit in the West, there have been so many commissions and so little has resulted from their deliberations and enquiries, and such large sums of money have been expended upon them.

Manitoba's Butter Exports.

Speaking of exporting, Manitoba has been doing a large amount of export made on butter the present season. Already 61 carloads, averaging 20,000 pounds each have been exported, and probably at least another ten cars will move in the course of the next two or three weeks. In the early part of the season the surplus from the Manitoba creameries went to the Coast at the rate of one and two cars a week, and gave great satisfaction. During the last few months the export has been to Montreal, and a part of this has been shipped by Hodgson Bros. and Rowson to Great Britain. This firm stated that they considered Manitoba butter quite equal to the finest Eastern Townships, that the butter sent to Britain had been entirely satisfactory. The make in Mani-

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toba the present season will be between six and a half and seven million pounds, and while the export has been heavy, a large quantity has been put into cold storage here by local dealers who up to three years ago were in the habit of depending entirely on the Eastern Townships butter for their supply for long keeping in cold storage. All of these good things have come about by the establishment of a general system of grading cream, and the government inspection and grading of the butter before it is shipped. The three western provinces now have a uniform grade for butter, and during next week they will ship to George Little Limited, the great British produce house, a car made up of 1-3 from each province. This is a sample car and will be utilized in the Old Country for advertising purposes for the West, and it is expected that there will be a very greatly extended export trade in butter next year. Seventy-five per cent. of our creameries in Manitoba will operate throughout the winter season. It is a very large increase over last year, and more than double the number that remained open four years ago.

Conserving Female Live Stock.

I spoke the other week of the prompt action taken by the Saskatchewan Government to prevent so large a percentage of our own female stock being taken to the United States. The Dominion Government has now announced a policy along the same lines, but in this case the Dominion is undertaking to pay the expenses of a farmer coming to any of the big central markets, such as Winnipeg, Calgary or Edmonton, to buy a carlot or to buy a number of carlots for himself and other farmers. The Government has also placed three men in the West, one in Manitoba, one in Saskatchewan and one in Alberta. These men will act in an advisory capacity to the bankers, in order to facilitate the financing of the cattle purchased. The Dominion Government, like that of Saskatchewan, is not taking any responsibility in the matter of buying the cattle for the farmers. They must do that themselves and make their own financial arrangements. But the Government agents will not only act in an advisory capacity to the bankers, but where necessary or where requested, will give assistance to the farmers also. D. M. Johnston, who represents the market section of the Dominion Department of Agriculture will have supreme charge of the whole work in the West. He is undoubtedly the best posted man in matters of this kind, west of the Great Lakes, and is thoroughly enthusiastic as to the need of getting the young stock back on to our western farms, to be fed, and in the case of female stock to be bred, for increase. The working out of the Dominion government plan will be watched with very keen interest. The first day that it was in operation, over five applications came in and over 165 head of young females were purchased to return to western farms, showing that there is no lack of interest in this work.

FOREST FIRE PROTECTION.

There are about 92,000,000 acres of forest land in the United States with more or less private protection against fire and 187,000,000 acres with public fire protection, constituting about one-half the timber area of the country. The expenditure in 1913 by public and private agencies for forest fire prevention was a little less than a million dollars on 250,000,000 acres, or four-tenths of a cent an acre.