

Conditions in the West

United Farmers of Alberta Hold Convention---Hospital Elevators Virtually Closed, but Order Likely to be Rescinded

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

A great many things have happened in the West since my last letter. The week ending January 21st I spent in Edmonton attending the Convention of the United Farmers of Alberta, an organization which has now some 17,000 members.

During the past year the Co-operative Elevator Co. of Alberta, which is an off-shoot of this organization, really the commercial end of it, amalgamated with the Grain Growers Grain Co., at Winnipeg, and thus increased the potential strength of the United Farmers of Alberta enormously. Whether the Grain Growers Grain Co. will not ultimately swallow the Alberta Co-operative is a nice question now.

The Grain Growers Grain Co. was the first of the commercial organizations to be established by the Grain Growers associations of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It is purely a joint stock company, and to the outside it looks as if the Alberta Co-operative Elevator Co. had largely lost its opportunity to develop a true spirit of co-operation by merging its interests with the other which is not co-operative in any sense. The only difference between the Grain Growers Grain Co. and the ordinary joint stock company is that all of the stock of the Grain Growers Grain Co. must be owned by farmers or their wives, and the amount of stock which may be owned by any one individual is limited.

The original scheme extended to the amalgamation of not only these two bodies mentioned, but also of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Co. The latter, however, refused to go in. Whether the question of this amalgamation will be revived at the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, which is to be held in Moose Jaw, beginning February 13th remains to be seen.

Another matter of importance dealt with by the Alberta convention was the question of Rural Credits. The three Western Provinces have been diligently working on something like a uniform Rural Credits Bill. The Hon. Edward Brown, provincial treasurer of Manitoba spoke before the Manitoba Grain Growers, on this subject, last month, at their annual gathering, while at Edmonton the Hon. C. R. Mitchell, provincial treasurer for Alberta explained the Bill.

There is one difference between the Bill for Manitoba and the Bill for Alberta which was rendered necessary by the difference of local conditions. That difference is, that whereas Manitoba proposes to utilize the rural municipal organizations in passing on loans and holds that the municipalities should be responsible to the board that administers the Rural Credits system, to the extent of five per cent of the value of the loans in the municipality, Alberta, mainly owing to the fact that Alberta has not a uniform Municipal Organization, will not adopt this system but everything will be done from a central board. Alberta has really three forms of government, a moderate number of organized municipalities, a number of local improvement districts and a very large area of unorganized territory.

Lacking municipal organization, it is likely that Alberta will also drop the scheme of selling shares, which is part of the Manitoba Bill. Probably Alberta will have a lower maximum of loan than Manitoba where the maximum is \$10,000. One feature of the long term mortgage, will be the same in all three provinces, namely, the length, thirty years, and mortgages will be paid on the amortization plan.

In the three provinces the rate of interest will be the rate at which it will be possible to borrow the money, plus 1 per cent for handling.

The scheme, as presented to the United Farmers was discussed at considerable length, and unanimously endorsed. At the same time it was made very clear that, while the Province was willing to go into this scheme in order to insure cheap money to the farmer, it was not by any means seeking to do a general provincial loan business.

Rural free hospitals and mutual hail insurance were two other subjects dealt with, at considerable length.

In connection with the Patriotic Fund, a very strong resolution was passed, suggesting that the Patriotic Fund be raised by Federal taxation. In order to raise the fund with the least possible expense it was further suggested that the municipalities

be empowered to collect this tax for the Federal Government.

Hospital Elevators.

The first of February was the date set by the Dominion government for the closing of the hospital elevators at the head of the Lakes. This put a stop to any mixing of grain.

As there have been many complaints sent in to Ottawa and the Canadian Council of Agriculture, the Canada Grain Commission met in session to discuss the matter and passed the following resolutions: Whereas the Canada Grain Commission has been since its creation granting licenses to hospital elevators at the lake front to handle "out-of-condition" and various grades of grain; and whereas the grain commission has issued an order effective February 1, 1917, prohibiting mixing of any grades in such elevators which order has closed up all the hospital elevators at the lake front; and whereas these licenses were granted on the understanding that they would be continued until the end of the present license year, and because of the large amount of low grade grain this year, the outlet afforded by these houses is particularly beneficial to the producer, therefore be it resolved that this council recommends the grain commission, to rescind the above mentioned order and permit these hospital elevators to continue in operation, as before, until their status is definitely determined by legislation.

News from the Lake declares that so far the houses are running, though the small inland houses are practically doing no business owing to car shortage. There seems to be a general idea that the order will be rescinded and the licenses issued for another year. The very last word from Fort William was that the mixing houses are operating in the face of the Order in Council.

Livestock.

Livestock prices have been making new records during the month of January. During the first week of the month the top price for steers was \$8.00, during the second week it had jumped to \$8.50 by the end of the third week it was \$9.10, while during the last week in the month it was \$9.75 until the last two days of the month when the price jumped to \$10 per cwt. The average price for the entire month of January during 1916 was \$6.59; 1915, \$6.53; 1914, \$7.14, and in 1913, \$5.45. But while beef has been high, hogs have made the most sensational records. The top price in hogs first week of January, \$12 per cwt., the second week, \$12.40, while during the third week they touched the high water mark, \$13.25. There was a slight falling off in the fourth week, the price at the top of the market being \$12.50. In 1916 the average price for January was \$8.95; 1915, \$6.88; 1914, \$8.02; 1913, \$8.20.

The movement of livestock has been quite heavy all month and there has been an active campaign of buyers from the east. In fact, Eastern buyers have been a feature of the markets during the entire month. A new feature which has developed this year is the taking out of hogs to feed, this has never been done excepting in very few instances, until the present season. Now it is quite common for a man to bring in a carload of finished hogs and take out a car of feeders. So far they have not obtained the lower rates for feeder hogs which they have for cattle, but there is to be a conference of agricultural interests with the railway to-morrow, and it is quite possible that this matter will then be adjusted. This conference is interesting from the fact that the railroad freight department have sent out and invited the various agricultural organizations to come in and lay their various matters before them and have a frank discussion of what can or what cannot be done to improve conditions. This is certainly a move in the right direction, and is likely to be the production of much good.

TORONTO RAILWAY CO.

The earnings of the Toronto Street Railway for the month of January make an excellent showing by comparison with January, 1916, the increase being 7.6 per cent., as follows: January, 1917, \$510,052; January, 1916, \$473,784. Increase, \$36,268, or 7.6 per cent.

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MERCHANT TONNAGE REDUCED.

Many interesting facts and figures connected with the world's shipping industry were discussed at the Foreign Trade Convention held recently in Pittsburgh. Some statistics embodied in the report of the National Foreign Trade Council on "World Shipping Conditions," are especially noteworthy. The merchant shipping of the world was put at 85 or 90 per cent to-day of what it was when the war broke out, and it is estimated that only slightly more than 50 per cent of the whole mercantile fleet of the world is now available for peaceful trade. British yards in 1913 turned out about 1,975,000 tons of shipping. Last year their output was reduced to 580,000 tons. In the United States last year, including vessels built on foreign account, 560,000 tons were launched. On December 1, 1916, steel ships ordered from American yards stood on the books at 1,428,000 tons, and in the United Kingdom 1,800,000 tons were then in various stages of completion.

The report included significant figures as to the percentage of vessel tonnage on the Pacific coast operated by different countries before the war and now. American, 26.10 per cent, now (after the La Follette bill), 1.97 per cent; British, 29.38 per cent, now 37.09 per cent; German, 18.47 per cent, now 0; Japanese 26.05 per cent, in May last 50.90 per cent.

TEN SECONDS FOR SAFETY.

Is it worth ten seconds of your time to keep from being injured or killed?

Thousands of persons every year are crippled or killed because they fail to place a value of ten seconds upon their safety.

Men were recently assigned to watch and report the conduct of people approaching and passing over tracks at important highways. Of 17,000 drivers of motor or other vehicles, 3,300 ran at reckless speed and 11,815 didn't care enough for their own lives and the lives of those in their charge to look in either direction to see if a train was approaching.

It's this disregard of common sense precautions that is bringing sorrow and suffering to so many homes.

The next time, and every time, you are about to cross a track, just say to yourself "ten seconds for safety." Then slow down so you know you can stop, if necessary, a safe distance before reaching the track, and look and listen. That's all that's ordinarily necessary and it won't take more than ten seconds of your time whether you are driving a horse, an automobile or a motorcycle, and if you are walking it won't take any time. Just a glance in each direction as you near the tracks will insure your safety.

Help prevent accidents.

GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY SYSTEM.

THE HIGH COST OF EVERYTHING.

As a result of unprecedented activity in the grain and provisions markets, American Board of Trade memberships have advanced in value sharply. Transfers have been made at \$7,300 each. For years the price ranged from \$2,000 to \$2,500, and during the early nineties a membership sold as low as \$550. More than a generation ago the price ran up during a period of speculative excitement to \$4,500, the high record for a long time. — The Annalist.