

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

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THE COMMERCIAL two weeks ago when it congratulated the fisheries commission on its success was what is termed "too previous." Subsequent events have shown that its usefulness is gone, the members having been divided in sympathy, and rendering a unanimous report or one that will be accepted by the province generally as a satisfactory solution of the proper government of the salmon canning and fishing industry out of the question. In fact, it would have been very much better had the commission never been appointed at all. Little else perhaps could have been expected considering the composition of the board and the conditions surrounding its investigations, and although there were grave forebodings in many quarters that something like this would happen, at the outset there was an air of success about the proceedings which was encouraging. A spirit of antagonism, however, soon developed between the canners and Mr. Wilmot, chairman of the commission. There had been for some time a shrewd suspicion among those interested in the fishing industry that the authorities at Ottawa did not fully comprehend and provide for requirements of the fisheries on the Pacific coast, and as Mr. Wilmot was superintendent of the department of fisheries, blame naturally was directed towards him, and when he made his recent report as the result of a flying trip through the province, dealing with one of the oldest and most important industries in the province, the aforesaid suspicion rested more strongly on him and was very decidedly confirmed. Canners especially said hard things about him. When he was appointed to the present commission and came to British Columbia he was undoubtedly in no conciliatory mood so far as the cannerymen were concerned. On the other hand the latter were inspired by no more friendly feelings towards Mr. Wilmot. They each approached each other with "blood" in their eyes. Both have acted indiscreetly. Mr. Wilmot in exhibiting an evident bias and refusing evidence which there was no reasonable ground for exclusion; the canners in showing their hand too plainly. Mr. Higgins, one of the commissioners, an old-timer and speaker of the legislature, naturally resented Mr. Wilmot's method of procedure, more especially from a parliamentary point of view, and so a split occurred. Some remarks have been made imputing ignorance and asininity to Mr. Wilmot. That is a mistaken impression. He is no fool and his knowledge of pisciculture generally and from an eastern point of view particularly, is undoubted. But Mr. Wilmot has a theory. He accepted the position of chairman of the fishery commission to prove it. His questioning of witnesses from start to finish, could only lead to one conclusion as to what his preconceived and fixed notions were. It was undoubtedly skillful, but it was not in any sense judicial or calculated to inspire confidence in the ultimate finding of the commission as being based solely on evidence. It is to be regretted that Mr. Wilmot was appointed, not because he is not qualified, but because he is dogmatic, prejudiced and practically had to sit in judgment on himself; and under such circumstances we could not but expect the verdict to be, as far as possible, in favor of the prisoner at the bar. It is to be regretted, too, that the scope of the commission was not more clearly defined and as wide as it could be made and that counsel had not been employed to examine witnesses. It will be generally admitted, in view of facts, that there were mistakes. The feeling now is that while a great deal of information has been

obtained, it has been robbed of its usefulness, so far as the immediate object its elicitation was intended to achieve, is concerned, viz., an impartial and definite scheme, for regulating the coast fisheries based on a complete knowledge of local conditions. There are two or three very important issues above all others at stake, the disposition of offal, involving as it does sanitary considerations on one hand and its economic value on the other; the fixing of close seasons; and the establishment of an equitable system of granting licenses. If licenses are to be granted at all, and even that is worthy of consideration in itself, it is then pertinent to enquire why the government or a licensing board should have in its discretion to say what applicants and how many should be allowed to fish; because therein lies a vital question of political economy and common rights not only of individuals but localities. The interests, too, of capitalists must not be overlooked and the apportionment of privileges so made as to protect both canners and fishermen and to render it, as far as can be, impossible to place either one at the mercy of the other. Under the present system it is not difficult to account for injustices complained of and the vicious custom which has grown up of bartering and abusing privileges which could not have been intended to and should not be merchantable.

An important step has been reached in the development of the industries of the province. It is understood that the Victoria mills are making experimental shipments of flour and meal to the Orient with a view to an export trade similar to that carried on south of the line. The supply of grains for this purpose, if the trade is to assume any proportions, must come largely from the Northwest and Manitoba. At present prairie wheat with a mixture of Oregon wheat, which can be imported sufficiently cheap, is being ground. An experiment has been made in the direction of growing wheat in the Fraser valley for milling purposes, but, while successful some seasons cannot uniformly be depended upon. In the direction of cereals, the Delta country can most profitably direct attention to oats. The oats of the Fraser valley are the finest quality for milling, equal it is said to the best in the world. That with horticulture, hop growing and other phases of agriculture would fully conform to the adaptabilities of that and similar districts along the coast. Some of the interior districts such as Okanagan and Chilcotin have capabilities for supplying at least the home market in wheat and barley and are admirably adapted for their cultivation. The premier brand of the Enderby flour, is authentically stated to be as good as anything in the market anywhere. Though not made from as hard wheat as the Manitoba article it has compensating qualities. For milling no better is grown than the barley that can be produced in the valleys of the southern interior of British Columbia. But for export over the Pacific, which is an important feature of Portland's trade, the supply must always come from the prairies east of the Rockies. If, as has been referred to on frequent occasions, our flour can be introduced into the markets of China and Japan, and there can be no question about its excellence compared with the Oregon product, it means the erection of flour mills and elevators on a large scale on the coast and an important outlet for a portion of the prairie wheat crop.

Business everywhere has perceptibly improved, but money is still tight and collections slow. Building is active and in this way a considerable element of the laboring population is kept employed. The outlook generally is good and this will be a prosperous summer if conditions remain favorable. An encouraging feature is the reported improvement of matters on the Sound. One reason for the depression which has existed is the dull times in Washington and Oregon which poured their surplus unemployed population in on us and swamped the labor market.

The weather remains beautiful and if it were not for the fear of bad weather to come, farming and gardening could have proceeded long ago. Considerable sailing has already been done. Only low water in the Columbia prevents navigation from opening and the rush into the Kootenay from commencing.

B. C. MARKET QUOTATIONS.

FLOUR AND FEED.—Flour and feed remains unaltered. Flour shows an upward tendency. Manitoba Hungarian flour is quoted at \$5.98; strong bakers, \$.60; ladies' choice, \$5.95; prairie Lilly, \$5.85; Oregon, \$6.25; Spokane, \$5.85; Enderby mills: Premier, \$5.85; three star, \$5.70; two star, \$.35. Oatmeal, eastern, \$3.40; California, \$4. National mills, Victoria \$3.65; rolled oats, eastern, \$3.40; California, \$3.90; National mills, \$3.25; cornmeal, \$3.10; split peas, \$3.50; pearl barley, \$4.50. Rice—The Victoria rice mills quote wholesale: Japan rice per ton, \$77.50; China rice, do, \$70; rice flour, do, \$70; chit rice, do, \$25; rice meal, do, \$17.50; chopped feed, \$33 to 35 per ton; bran, \$24; shorts, \$25; oats, \$30 to 32; wheat \$35 to 40; oil cake, \$40. Wheat is quoted in car lots \$30 to \$32; oats \$25 to \$25.50; chop, barley, \$26.

Eggs—Oregon eggs now rule the market and are offering at 19c and 20c. Fresh ranch eggs are slow and eastern eggs out of stock.

DAIRY—Cheese is firm at 13c. Butter is weak. Creamery shows tendency to decline at 28c and 29c. Good dairy would be worth 22c. California butter having taken a decided tumble in San Francisco is now quoted at 27c here. It is likely to be rushed in at low prices to the exclusion of eastern stock for some time.

FRUITS—Apples remain scarce and high, eastern \$5.50 to \$6.50 per barrel, and Oregon \$1.50 to \$2 per box. California oranges are: Riverdale \$2 to \$2.50; navel \$1.25 to \$4.50; lemons, California, \$4.75; Sicilies \$3; coconuts \$1 per dozen; bananas \$4 bunch.

VEGETABLES, ETC.—The potato market is demoralized, having reached the lowest point ever sold at in this market. Fraser river potatoes are selling at \$15 a ton and almost absolutely without demand and Ashcroft at \$25. Sound potatoes are offering in large lots at prices that means a buying price of from \$6 to \$7 1/2 per ton. Other vegetables remain without change.

MEATS—Old quotations stand and no improvement in the situation is to be noted, notwithstanding advances in the east. Regular quotations are:—Hams, 13 to 13c; breakfast bacon, 12 1/2 to 13c; long clear roll, 10 1/2 to 11c; smoked, 12c; backs, salt dry, 11c; smoked, 12 1/2 to 13c; pure kettle rendered lard, 12 1/2 to 13c; steam rendered lard, 11 to 12c; compound, 11 to 11c.

DRESSED MEATS AND LIVE STOCK—No change. The winter up country though not severe has been long and trying one for stock. The facts of the depletion of the ranges several times commented on in THE COMMERCIAL, with the prospects of ultimate destruction of the stock industry up country, has been brought before the attention of the legislature and legislation introduced to provide, if possible, against such contingency. Dressed beef 9c; hogs, 12c; mutton, 13 to 13c. Live weight, steers, 5c; cows, 4 1/2c; hogs, 7 1/2c; sheep, 7c.

FISH—The markets for the present is bare, but quotations are reasonable: Salmon, 8 to 10c; halibut, 5 to 7c; cod, 4 to 5c; smelts, 7 to 8c.

LUMBER, SHINGLES, ETC.—There has been a large stock of shingles and manufactured wood made for the Northwest market. The market for shingles has been strengthened. Prices are more uniform. Prices quoted here for fifty cent points delivered is \$2.85, with varying prices according to freight rates for different points. Rough merchantable, ordinary sizes, in lengths to 40c feet, inclusive, \$9 per M feet; rough deck plank, average length 35 feet, \$19; dressed flooring, \$17; pickets, \$9; laths, 4 feet, \$2. The above is for cargo lots for foreign