

The Wool Shortage

A Canadian Wool Commission Appointed.

(Special Correspondence).

TORONTO, Ont., May 7th.

The world-shortage of wool, and the imperative need of some action being taken to facilitate the business of the Canadian textile trades, the Federal Government has, on the sanction of the Imperial authorities, formed what is to be known as the Canadian Wool Commission. This body will have charge of the purchase of the Australasian wool released by the British Government to the Canadian interests. The Commission will also have charge of its distribution in Canada.

This Commission consists of Mr. George Pattinson, Preston, Mr. I. Bonner, Hespeler, Mr. C. W. Bates, Paris, Mr. James Roastmond, Carleton Place, Mr. George Forbes, Almonte, and Mr. F. B. Hayes, Toronto, Honorary Secretary.

The necessity of appointing this Commission, as a means of facilitating Canadian business, and preventing an absolute cessation of many of the textile trades, was brought to the attention of the Right Hon. Walter Long, Secretary for the Colonies on April 7th last. The explanation was made at that time, that the British Government was taking drastic action regarding the exportation of Australasian wool for military reasons.

On the 26th of April, the British authorities notified Sir George E. Foster, Acting Premier, that 16,000 bales of Australian and 7,000 bales of New Zealand wool could be sold to Canada, on the understanding that the allocations would be strictly for manufacturing purposes and not for accumulation or speculation. The personnel of the proposed Wool Commission was soon decided upon, and the members advised the authorities that they would appoint the Canadian Trade Commissioners at Melbourne and Auckland, as the Canadian wool representatives, through whom the orders should be transmitted, Lieut. W. G. Worth, of the 18th Battalion, C.E.F., was selected to act as the Canadian Wool Commission's agent at Bradford, England.

Heretofore, no publicity has been given to the appointment of the Canadian Wool Commission, and its work, and scope, and something of a false impression has been created in Western Canada among the sheep rearers—as to its aims and objects. At present the wool growers of the west are permitted to export wool under license, and prices, declared to be entirely satisfactory to the growers are obtained. The Western wool growers think that the Canadian Wool Commission intends preventing the exportation of Canadian wool, by seeking the cancellation of these export licenses. The Canadian Wool Commission discounts this impression and Mr. F. B. Hayes states

emphatically that such is not the case. The Canadian textile interests recognise the necessity of encouraging Canadian wool growers, and intends doing everything, including the payment of market prices, to encourage the industry. "We want to bring the growers and the textile men closer together," declared Mr. Hayes. "We want to allay all suspicions, and we want Canadian wool. We recognise the wish of the Canadian growers to go into the best market, and we want to create a good Canadian market for them. We feel that we want an opportunity of purchasing Canadian-grown wool at market prices before it is exported."

In connection with the appointment of the Canadian Wool Commission, Mr. F. B. Hayes has sent the following notice to the firms connected with the Canadian Textile trade:

"In view of the fact that the British Government has authorized 16,000 bales of Australian and 7,000 of New Zealand wool to be exported to Canada, the distribution of which is to be in the hands of the Canadian Government, a request was made that a Committee of Woolen manufacturers be appointed to act in an advisory capacity to the Government in the distribution of these wools to the trade, and also to assist in obtaining and shipping of wools and tops from England.

"This committee was duly created with the approval of the Government at a meeting of the woolen Manufacturers and Dealers, held at Ottawa." The notice also gives the composition of the commission.

With a view to finding out how the wool can best be distributed the Canadian Wool Commission has also forwarded the following communication to those engaged in the textile trades:

"In order to distribute this wool in the most equitable way it is necessary for the Commission to know exactly how much wool each manufacturer and dealer requires. Will you, therefore, let me know by return mail how much wool you wish to obtain a license for the quantity of each, the quality you desire to be specified later. After you obtain your license from the Wool Commission, you may buy the wool either direct through your brokers in Australasia or through your local wool dealer. We have not yet obtained prices, but are assured that they will be below the London prices for these same wools. There are available about 5,000,000 pounds of clean wool. In 1916 Canada imported 21,000,000 pounds of wool. There will probably be difficulties in obtaining shipping space as there is only one steamer per month sailing for Vancouver from Australia, and it is necessary to move quickly to obtain space in May and June steamers."

FROM "HAND TO MOUTH".

The Canadian Northern is living from "hand to mouth." The majority say in effect that, as the country has put up so much for these lines with a hundred million or so yet required, the proper thing to do is for the government, considering its involved interest, to nationalize the whole business. The urgency of doing so is impressed on the government but emphasis is laid on the need of independent management free from politics.

SUGGESTS FURTHER STATE AID.

In the minority report Chairman A. H. Smith, who is president of the New York Central, suggests that further state aid be rendered and that the Grand Trunk be relieved of the Grand Trunk Pacific. He finds that the precarious financial situation of the Canadian Northern is partly due to its unfinished state and that the proposed management by an independent board cannot be assured since one parliament cannot bind its successors. Mr. Smith would create a board of trustees of two government officials and three private citizens to act for the government in carrying out the reorganization which would include:

(1) Confining the Canadian Northern to the west and compelling it to run the G.T.P.

(2) Leasing the lines between North Bay and Winnipeg except the C.P.R. for a term of twenty-one years to either the Canadian Northern or Grand Trunk and if neither applies to any other company putting up the necessary capital the Grand Trunk would take over the C.N.R. in the east. Mr. Smith declares that the construction of the Hudson Bay road, even to open up new territory, is unjustified.

Control of Food Prices

Debate in the House of Commons.

The question of Government control of food prices in Canada, with possible embargo on the export of foodstuffs, led to a heated discussion in the House of Commons on Thursday last. The debate was started by Mr. G. W. Kyte, member for Richmond, who moved the adjournment of the House to refer to the abnormal increase in the price of flour. Mr. Kyte suggested that the Government should commandeer all wheat not in farmers' hands and then require the millers to mill it at a reasonable price. Mr. Kyte declared that the investigations recently made by the Government had been unproductive of result.

In a brief reply the Hon. Thomas W. Crothers, Minister of Labor, said that for some time the officers of his department had been collecting statistics and other information in regard to the flour market and that upon learning of Wednesday's sharp advance in the price of flour he had instructed Mr. O'Connor, K.C., to proceed at once to Montreal and investigate.

Sir Thomas White stated that if they were to act upon Mr. Kyte's remedy and commandeer wheat, which is \$3 a bushel the Government would have to raise \$300,000,000. The Finance Minister referred to the shortage of tonnage caused by the enemy's submarines, and the world shortage of foodstuffs as the cause of the trouble.

One of the Government's supporters Mr. W. F. Cockshutt, of Brantford, supported the demand for price control. "In the near future either this Government or some other Government must take in hand the price of foodstuffs in the Dominion of Canada, I say that believing it to be true," declared the Brantford member. "It has been done in other countries, and it will have to be done here. It is a practical necessity of the situation, absolutely."

A number of other members took part in the discussion.

STAPLE FOODS NOT SCARCE IN BRITAIN.

In an editorial on the British premier's Guildhall speech, the London Times says:

"It is useless to deny that German calculations as to the quantity of shipping they could and would destroy have so far been verified that the complacency with which the threat was received here was ill-managed. Lloyd George did not say how much tonnage had been sunk. Still, we think the government would do well to be less reticent.

"The premier said that during the last months of 1916 shipping had been sunk at the rate of hundreds of thousands of tons a year, but he might have added that during the last three months it had been sunk at the rate of millions a year. The worst of it is that the pace has increased and is still increasing. Yet the effect has not been what the Germans expected. So far there has not been any sign of starvation, even serious scarcity of food.

TWO SHORTAGES.

"The only article that has failed is potatoes, for which we are not dependent on shipping, because only a minute proportion, mainly from France, are ordinarily imported. The only other commodity which has been perceptibly short is sugar, but that has been short all along through the cutting off by war of our previous largest sources of supply. Of other staple foods none has failed, nor has there been any privation save in high prices and voluntary abstinence.

"Lloyd George explained why the successful submarine campaign had so far failed to produce the anticipated effect. It has been met by restriction of imports and allocation of tonnage to necessities. Last year unnecessary imports were cut down by a million and a half tons. Under existing arrangements they are being curtailed at the rate of an additional six million tons, which will be raised to between ten and eleven millions. We congratulate the government on the vigorous development of this policy.

DANGER TO PUBLIC.

"So they get accustomed to the weekly toll instead of being impressed and take it lightly. That is precisely the danger we are in now. People will not believe that serious trouble is in store because they see no lack of food in spite of losses from submarines. But serious trouble is coming, and very soon.

"We believe with Lloyd George that an effective method of dealing with the new super-submarine will be found. He said the best U. S. brains were now employed with our own and the French in solving the problem. We, too, look confidently to the results."

Canada's Railway Problem

Report of the Commission of Inquiry—Majority Propose Nationalization of Grand Trunk Pacific and Canadian Northern

OTTAWA, Ont., May 3rd.

A national system of Canadian railways to be owned by the state and operated by an independent commission, divorced from politics and political influences, and embracing all the roads except the Canadian Pacific, is the outstanding recommendation of the majority report of the commission inquiring into the general question of railway transportation in Canada.

This report, emanating from Sir Henry Drayton and Mr. W. M. Ackworth and a minority report advocating private ownership but reorganizing of the lines affected, were tabled in the House last evening by Sir Thomas White.

FAR-REACHING EFFECT.

The reports are as voluminous as their importance suggests and give evidence of great and exhaustive research and painstaking consideration. If the scheme suggested be given effect to there will be put two railway systems in Canada—the private owned Canadian Pacific and the state owned merger embracing the Grand Trunk, Grand Trunk Pacific, Canadian Northern, Transcontinental, Intercolonial and Prince Edward Island Railways.

As to the Grand Trunk the majority find the direction three thousand miles away to be a handicap and the conditions such as to lead to inefficiency. It needs now and will continue to need public aid to the extent of millions.