

Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

Ottawa, Nov. 10th, 1917.

Your correspondent has been in Ottawa all week attending the conference called by the Minister of Agriculture and the Live Stock Commissioner to discuss the best means of putting on an active campaign for the increased production of hogs.

Some thirty representative men from the four Western Provinces were brought to this Conference, all of them very busy men — dropped what they were doing and responded at once to the call. Among them were representative hog breeders, representatives of the Grain Growers Associations and united farmers, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, representatives from the live stock branches of the agricultural colleges and the experimental farms, both Dominion and Provincial.

There is no reserve in saying that the gathering at Ottawa represented the best informed men on the live stock situation in Western Canada. It was found at the first gathering of the delegates that there was a wonderful unanimity of opinion on three points. Every delegate was convinced that in order to put on a successful campaign it was necessary that the Government give a guarantee as to prices, that a supply of cheaper feed be made available for those sections of the West where feed this year is short, and that something be done to augment the supply of labor. The delegates felt that these three things were absolutely essential. Perhaps a word of explanation might be in order as to why it was felt that the best appeal could be made for production on a fixed price.

A very large percentage of the hog growers of the West and more especially of Saskatchewan and Alberta are foreign-born, and a very great many of them come within the scope of the Franchise Act. It was felt by the delegates that it was scarcely reasonable to approach them as they are naturally feeling sore at being disfranchised and to make an appeal on patriotic grounds, and further, the recent drop of \$3.00 per hundredweight, has made the western hog grower extremely skeptical as to the stability of profitable prices, unless guaranteed by Government. This was the condition of mind in which the delegates met the Food Controller, Hon. Mr. W. J. Hanna.

During the first day Mr. Hanna addressed the conference three times. He gave them information as to conditions overseas, which he frankly stated he was not allowed to give the press. He succeeded in convincing every delegate that the need of production was extreme to a degree. He also told them very plainly that at the present time, for reasons which he could not explain, it would be impossible to guarantee a fixed price. The Conference then divided into three committees, with representatives from each of the four provinces on each committee. These committees dealt, one, with the question of marketing and prices; one, with the question of feeds; and one, with the question of labor. On Thursday afternoon the conference came together as a whole and these committees reported.

The Committee on Marketing and Prices stated their position as follows: They were as firmly convinced as ever that a fixed price, guaranteed by the Government would have been the best possible ammunition for such a campaign as is necessary to increase production. They declared with equal emphasis that they have no intention of making their co-operation in this matter contingent on such a guarantee. They made the following suggestion:

That in view of the fact that in the past the greatest disturbing element in the continuity of hog production has been the uncertainty of price as set by the packer and as the present proposal of the food controller is simply one of regulation of profits, that in order to ensure the greatest possible confidence on the part of the producer the Government be requested to extend its authority to the point of absolute control of packing houses with the power to operate, if necessary, also to provide for such extension of abattoir facilities as may be required to take care of the increased production of hogs, as they may be ready for the market, and that a brief but very definite statement to this effect be published over the signature of the Minister of Agriculture. That this statement be in the form of a typewritten document, signed in person by the Minister, photographed and a facsimile published in every newspaper in Canada, both weekly and daily.

The new Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. T. A. Crerar, is so highly esteemed by farmers in the West that it was felt ninety per cent would accept some

such statement from him as almost, if not quite equal, to a fixed price. This committee also urged the necessity of the Food Controller's Office of distributing information as to the condition of transportation, and any tendency to glut the market, so that market shipment might be held back until such time as there was room to get the product forward to Britain and her Allies. It was felt to be highly important, in view of the fact that the Controller had stated that the recent drop was due to the diversion of tonnage from Canadian ports to American ports, in order to meet the emergency in France in the matter of food stuffs. The report of this Marketing and Price Committee was unanimously adopted by the whole conference, many members speaking in favor of the securing of a statement from the Minister of Agriculture over his own signature.

The Committee on Feeds took up first the matter of bran and short, asking that the western feeders, on being relieved from the necessity of buying a quantity of flour which they do not want, in order to secure bran and shorts which are essential for their feedings, pointed out that while the mills insist on this in Canada, they are shipping literally in train loads, one hundred cars at a time, of straight bran and shorts to United States with no flour-buying docks on it. Furthermore, they want the adulteration of shorts and bran stopped. At certain seasons of the year particularly it has been the practice to grind up black seeds and other offal and mix it with the bran and shorts, shorts, especially, and frequently this mixture is poisonous to young pigs.

With regard to the bran and shorts proposition they were entirely in accord with the findings of the eastern live stock men the previous week. They also took up the matter of screenings. It was thought that the Conference in Winnipeg in October had settled the screenings question with the Western feeders, and would have no difficulty in securing screenings in the future, but this had turned out a vain hope, and while the western feeders have not been able to secure screenings at all and are being asked \$40.00 to \$45.00 a ton, 13,000 ton of these screenings have been shipped to Duluth since the conference.

The committee asked that the Government take over forthwith the entire output of screenings compensating the elevators on a cash basis for services rendered in connection with cleaning the grain. That the factors entering into the determining of the price paid shippers of grain be:

- (a) The composition of screenings.
- (b) The export value of refuse screenings.
- (c) The market value of re-cleaned screenings arrived at on the basis of 75 per cent of the market value of No. 2 C. W. oats for Fort William.

That arrangements be made to separate these screenings into such standard grades as may be necessary to meet the requirements of Canadian feeders. That assurance be given this convention that an announcement in reference thereto shall be made in time to permit of the inclusion in the advertisements and other newspaper propaganda going out this week in connection with the campaign for increased hog production.

The Labor Committee reported as follows:

Whereas a grave crisis exists in the matter of sufficient supply of the staple foods necessary for the sustenance of the soldiers and civilian populations of the Allied European nations, and,

Whereas increased production in Canada is unquestionably dependent upon an adequate supply of efficient farm labor, and,

Whereas many farmers and farm laborers of military age will not claim exemption under the provision of the Military Service Act,

Therefore, we, the members of this pork production conference, consider it imperative that immediate action be taken to exempt automatically bona fide farmers and bona fide farm laborers of military age.

It will be seen from this that the conference came to a unanimous conclusion on certain points, and Friday morning these were all taken up by the Minister of Agriculture, and he assured the conference that it would be impossible for him to give definite answers along these lines, without consultation with his colleagues, but that he would take the matters up immediately, and that he felt he could guarantee that decisions would be reached before the ministers left for their constituencies on Saturday night, and with this the conference had to be satisfied, though a few of the members declared their intention to

wait in Ottawa until they got a decision on the labor question, the screenings and the statement to be signed by Mr. Crerar.

The extreme urgency of the matter with regard to production is that between the 15th of November and the end of December the sows in the West must be bred if there are to be any spring litters, so that there is no time to be lost. As already stated, the drop in prices combined with shortage of labor and scarcity of feed, has tended to make men sell their sows, and already a serious number have gone to the shambles. Given the assurance asked for the delegation felt that they could go back and put up a good campaign for increased production, but without these they have not much hope of success. The West has been flim-flammed on the hog proposition so often that at the present time every last man of them is from Missouri, he has got to be shown. The opportunity for the new Minister of Agriculture is a great one. He has the confidence of the Western farmers and if he stands to his guns and makes his colleagues back him in the guarantees asked for, he will not only have the satisfaction of bringing off the necessary increase in hog production, but he will establish himself in the faith of the West as no Minister of Agriculture has ever done in the past twenty-five years.

CROPS IN QUEBEC.

The Provincial Bureau of Statistics communicates a bulletin on the average crop-yield according to reports sent in by 2,000 local correspondents, in all municipalities of the province.

Those reports were made at the end of September and give only a preliminary statement of the yield, according to the first threshings, per acre of wheat, oats, barley, rye, peas, beans, buckwheat, flax and mixed grains. As a rule, the yield has not been as great as the appearance of the crops in the month of August gave reason to hope.

Wheat gives 14.25 bushels to the acre, against 15 last year. As the area seeded in the spring was 277,400 acres, the total yield would therefore be 3,952,900 bushels.

Oats give about the same quantity per acre as last year, say 22.75 bushels; this, with a seeded area of 1,492,700 acres, gives a total yield of 33,958,900 bushels.

Barley also remains as in 1916, say 20 bushels to the acre, the area cultivated being 165,600 acres, the total yield would therefore amount to 3,312,000 bushels.

Rye gives a higher yield than in 1916, say 19.75 against 14.25 bushels to the acre. Area seeded in the spring 22,450 acres; total yield estimated at 443,400 bushels.

In peas there has been a slight increase in the yield, compared with that of 1916, namely: 13.50 as against 14.00 bushels. On the other hand, as the area seeded was much larger, the yield would be 897,100 bushels for the 66,450 acres seeded in the spring.

Beans were given a considerable share of the farmer's attention in the spring. In 1916, 4,400 acres were seeded, while in the spring of 1917 there were 55,157 acres. Nevertheless, the yield this fall is less than that of last year, say 15.25 against 17.75 bushels. Total yield of beans 841,000 bushels. Area seeded in spring 163,000 acres; total yield 2,822,100 bushels.

Flax has yielded a good crop of seed, namely, 12 bushels an acre against 10.50 in 1916. Total production, 68,400 bushels.

Mixed grains, like fodder plants, have yielded above the average this fall. In 1916, the yield was 20.25 bushels to the acre; this fall it is 25 bushels to the acre. As the area seeded in the spring was 122,800 acres, the total production would thus be 3,070,000 bushels.

Corn for husking gives a smaller yield this fall: 23 bushels to the acre, while it was 24.75 in 1916.

To better judge of the average yield of cereals and leguminous plants, per acre, in the whole Province of Quebec and in all Canada below is a table which will no doubt be of interest to farmers as well as to dealers, transportation companies and financial institutions:

	Quebec, bush.	Canada, bush.
Spring wheat	14.25	15.75
Oats	22.75	29.50
Barley	20.00	21.50
Rye	19.75	20.50
Peas	13.50	18.50
Beans	15.25	14.75
Buckwheat	17.25	12.25
Flax	12.00
Mixed grains	25.00	33.50
Corn for husking	23.00	25.75