

RAILWAYS IN SIBERIA ARE STILL BLOCKED

Transportation Difficulties, Reports Canadian Trade Commissioner, are Getting Steadily Worse and Affect Import Trade.

ECONOMIC LIFE PARALYZED

Canadian Trade Commissioner L. D. Wilgress, writing from Vladivostok, reports as follows: The relief of the present economic situation in Siberia may be said to be entirely contingent upon the restoration of normal railway facilities with the interior. Through communication with Western Siberia was re-established last September, when the line was cleared by the Czecho-Slovaks. It was then anticipated that a large quantity of supplies urgently required by the civil population would be transported from Vladivostok. The result was that the import business in foreign goods became brisk. It soon became evident, however, that the transport situation was unsatisfactory, and conditions have since been getting steadily worse.

The carrying capacity of the main Siberia line is hampered by the shortage of freight cars, the lack of co-ordination between the operating departments of the several systems into which the line is divided, the breakdown of a great number of locomotives and the impossibility of repair under existing conditions, the dissatisfaction among employees of certain systems owing to back pay, the bad state of the road-bed and the circumstances arising out of the political situation. Lack of adequate rolling stock is the chief difficulty. A large number of freight cars are being used for passengers in order to maintain the passenger services. Many cars are held up at points along the line owing to the need of repair. A great number of cars are congested at station Manchuria waiting to be carried further into the interior, since the Trans-Baikal railway has found it impossible to handle the traffic transferred to this system by the Chinese Eastern railway. Owing to difficulty of finding storage space, cars frequently remain at points of destination for long periods before being unloaded.

Practically every system comprising the main Siberian railway is at the present time being operated at a great loss. This is an inevitable result of the falling off in traffic due to decreased carrying capacity. The rates on goods have recently been increased from six to ten times the pre-war tariff. This is not sufficient, however, to relieve the financial position of the railways. In the case of the Trans-Baikal railway the employees have been without pay for several months and great dissatisfaction exists.

An average of 10 freight cars a day

including military supply cars have been despatched from Vladivostok for Western Siberia during the present month. This compares with from 50 to 130 cars a day during the greater part of 1917. In order to relieve the congestion at Manchuria station, the Chinese Eastern railway has declared an embargo for an indefinite period on the acceptance of goods for despatch to Western Siberia other than for military purposes.

The railway administration has lately decided to try the experiment of re-establishing the express passenger service and to operate a bi-weekly courier train between Omsk and Vladivostok, reducing the journey to eight days. In this way they hope to do away with the necessity of providing special cars for officials and other parties who are obliged to travel between the two cities.

The Stevens Railway Commission with its corps of 300 trained American railwaymen is still negotiating for permission to take over the operation of the Siberian railway, but up to the present it has not been found possible to come to any agreement.

EFFECT ON BUSINESS.

The critical position with regard to transport may be said to have paralyzed the economic and business life of the country. The relief of the great shortage of goods in the interior is not possible if adequate railway communication cannot be maintained. Private firms in Vladivostok are no longer contracting foreign supplies for future delivery and the import business is dull as compared with several months ago. The seriousness of the situation has led to a great deal of consideration being given to this problem by public organizations. The co-operative organizations with offices in Vladivostok recently held a conference and discussed the subject of transport fully whereupon it was decided to send the following telegram to the Central Co-operative Organization in Omsk:—

"We urgently request you to inform the proper Government authorities that the conference of representatives of all the co-operative organizations in Vladivostok report that their activity, as also the activity of private firms, in endeavouring to satisfy the urgent need of the population for articles of first necessity, is paralyzed by the breakdown of the transport facilities. The position is similar as regards economic relief by allied countries. The receipt of goods from abroad, such as tools, harvesting machinery and binder twine, is blocked by the absence of any guarantee that the goods in question can be carried further into Siberia than the port of entry. The disruption of normal transport is reflected by the falling off of the number of the freight cars passing from the Ussuri to the Trans-Baikal railway. At the present time on an average of ten cars a day, including cars for military purposes, is transferred from one system to the other, while for an indefinite period the acceptance in Vladivostok by the railway of all kinds of freight except that for military purposes has been suspended by the railway. In general there has been a great falling off in the carrying capacity of the various rail-

WHEAT STORED IN ELEVATORS ON PRAIRIE

Less Inspected Than at This Period Last Year According to Report from the West.

SEED GRAIN POSITION

The Office of the Commissioner of Immigration and Colonization at Winnipeg, reports on western conditions as follows:—

Grain: In store Government Interior Elevators, Moosejaw, 1,774,576 bushels; Saskatoon, 1,551,833 bushels; Calgary, 2,223,845 bushels.

In store C.P. Interior Elevators, 12,325,451 bushels; 1917, 12,804,112 bushels.

In store all elevators at Lake Front, 26,659,858 bushels. Inspected since September 1, 1918:—

	Wheat.	Other grains.	Total.
1918.	94,674,000	24,323,900	118,997,900
1917.	114,522,000	40,007,950	154,529,950
Loaded since September 1, 1918,	65,304,455 bushels;	1917,	95,537,050 bushels.

way systems. This especially applies to the Trans-Baikal railway as compared to the carrying capacity of that line in the month of October. Cars with military supplies remain for a long time at points of destination without being unloaded; for example, at Chita. Having in view the great significance of Vladivostok as the only gateway through which the economic life of the country is in touch with outside markets, we request that energetic and radical measures be adopted towards improving the transport situation. From our point of view we consider first of all necessary the creation of a strong co-ordinated administration of the railways, the co-ordination through a committee of the interests of the allied military authorities on the one hand and of the management of the railway and of the Far Eastern District Committee on the other, the adoption of energetic measures towards improving the technical and operating departments and the locomotive works, the immediate satisfaction of the employees and workmen on the Trans-Baikal railway as regards salary, the creation of a co-ordinating organ for distributing and controlling freight facilities, both in regard to goods for the civil population and for military needs, the granting of a preference to goods of first necessity for the needs of the civil population and the determination of the proper proportions in the transfer of freight from one system to another, removing the unproportional despatch of goods from Harbin and other stations of the Chinese Eastern railway for the transfer to the Trans-Baikal railway as compared with goods from Vladivostok. At the present time it is evident that the latter point of despatch is at a disadvantage in this connection."

Daily average marketed and loaded:

	Marketed.	Loaded.
1919...	150,106 bushels,	98 cars.
1918...	246,166 "	184 "

Grain shipped by rail since September, 1918, C.P. tracks, 5,144,891 bushels; Lake Front, 6,216,000 bushels.

Cars grain unloaded Fort William since September 1, 1918, 40,761; 1917, 58,472; 1916, 55,497.

During week 413 cars flour shipped from various mills Prairie Provinces—last year 866 cars.

Average number bushels various kinds of grain per car as shown by outturns at elevators on C.P. tracks, Fort William, during week:—

	1919.	1918.
Wheat...	1,290	1,293
Oats...	1,754	1,928
Barley...	1,414	1,536
Flax...	1,171	1,242
Rye...	1,731	1,235

Dominion Seed Purchasing Commissioner reports that province of Alberta will have sufficient seed oats for its own requirements next spring and will not need to import from other sources of supply.

Arrangements have been completed by seed grain branch of the Dominion Department of Agriculture, Alberta Provincial Department of Agriculture and municipal districts for purchase and distribution of seed grain to settlers who by reason of total crop failure last year are unable to otherwise secure seed grain. In addition, mortgage companies operating in Alberta have agreed to advance to farmers who already have loans from any company, sum sufficient for purchase of seed grain, amount to be added to farmers' original mortgage.

As a result of the embargo on food-stuffs from Canada and United States, Maple Leaf Milling Co., at Brandon, has closed down and Western Canada Flour Mills expected to do likewise shortly.

Farming and agriculture: The Land Settlement Board has been authorized by the Provincial Government of British Columbia to acquire an area of land between Fernie and Hosmer on the Crows Nest Pass Railway. A block, which contains, approximately, 7,000 acres, has already been valued by appraisers and steps will be taken immediately to secure title and provide for early throwing-open of area for settlement.

E.D. & B.C. Railway Company has brought down 400 cars of hay from the Grouard district for south country.

During the week a car of butter was sold by the Saskatchewan Co-operative Creamery Co., at Moosejaw, for \$28,280, stated to be the largest price ever paid for a car of butter.

There are about sixty per cent more tractors being brought into Canada through Emerson than normal transportation, largely due to rumour that duty will again be assessed on tractors under value of \$1,400, after February 7.

Milk Yield Improves.

According to the report of the Minister of Agriculture for the year ending March 31, 1918, the average yield of milk per cow for all Canada has increased fully 30 per cent since herd-record work, or cow testing, was first started by the Department of Agriculture, as indicated by the records.