

Our Ottawa Letter

Farm Labor—Results of Conscription—Freights—The Soldiers' Vote.

(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

the following interesting comment on the wool situation—

Military necessity is the dominating feature in the wool market. Approximately 200 million pounds of clean-scoured wool will be required to properly clothe an active army of three million men. The government has changed the specifications for military goods, and "carpet" wools, of which we imported nearly 70 million pounds (greasy) in the last fiscal year, are now being used more or less for this purpose. However, the fact remains that war demands are making serious inroads on wool supplies, and the problem of their consideration cannot be taken too seriously. The creation by the Administration at Washington of a new War Board to co-ordinate the work of the various committees handling war supplies has suspended action by the trade in defining a definite buying policy in South America in favor of our own government's military needs until the policy of the new board could be ascertained as regards wool. Mill machinery is being employed increasingly on government work. Meantime, this country is not alone in its restrictions upon civilian shipments during the next four months, and has refused additional shipping to the wool importers, besides which it is improbable that this country will be allowed any great quantities of bolls and waste. As a result of the scarcity of shipping, about 40 per cent. of the South African new clip has been offered to the British Government on its tender of 55 per cent. over 1914 prices. The market for the balance is somewhat irregular. The South American markets, especially Argentina, are in a rather chaotic condition due to constantly recurring strikes, fomented doubtless by German propagandists, but prices there are slowly strengthening. The market here during the past 30 days has changed but little; the tendency, more particularly on medium to low wools, is upward. This month there will be held in the Boston Chamber of Commerce an auction of Australian wools, differing little, except for the quantity of wool offered, from the sales held in London, and which will be held on account of the British Government. Importers here are obliged for the first time in the history of the trade to apply to Washington for licenses to import foreign wools, this being done to comply with the "Trading-With-The-Enemy" Act.

W.S.G.G.A. RAISED \$133

Enclosed find the sum of \$133 to be donated to the Canadian Red Cross Fund by the Women's Section of the Quimper Grain Growers' local. The money was raised at a box social in November and a bazaar held on December 7.

WM. McCULLOUGH.

Quimper, Sask.

XMAS MONEY FOR BELGIANS

Please find enclosed \$2.75 which you will please forward to the Belgian Relief Fund. It was given to me through their Sunday school teacher, by nine little boys, ranging from 9 to 13 years. Instead of my giving them their usual Christmas present, they all very willingly agreed to go without and instead give their little bit to some patriotic fund. Their little bit amounted to \$2.75.

MABEL M. DANBROOK.

Salvador, Sask.

CURRENT EVENTS

The food situation in the Allied nations is becoming critical. Lord Rhonda the British food controller, recently stated that he viewed the situation with grave anxiety. In France the government has requisitioned the wheat crop and cut the bread ration to allow only seven ounces of bread daily to all persons except the very poor and those doing hard manual labor. In Italy conditions are not as good perhaps, as in either England or France. Compulsory rationing will be started in England immediately with meats, other commodities being taken under control as required.

The time is very near when the eating of bacon in Canada will be prohibited, according to J. D. McGregor, western food controller. At present there is all the bacon in storage for which there is shipping, but with the launching of vessels which are now under construction in Canada and the United States a steady stream of supplies will go overseas and all the bacon produced in Canada will be required to supply the European needs.

Hon. F. B. Carvell, minister of public works, has announced that while he is minister there shall be no expenditure in that department which is not absolutely necessary. Nearly all big public works have been closed down altogether or confined to absolutely necessary operations to prevent deterioration.

The rumor that Sir Wilfrid Laurier intended resigning the leadership of the Liberal party in Canada to be succeeded by Hon. Mackenzie King has been denied.

Ottawa, Jan. 11.—With the return of Sir Robert Borden and other ministers to the capital things have commenced to happen. The week has been one of conferences of various kinds to consider the various problems that confront the Union government and in regard to which some action must be taken. The grain men, representatives of the board of grain supervisors, the millers and the food controller's department have been in session for a few days to consider the distribution of wheat and flour, the conservation of existing supplies and increased production during the approaching season. Early next week there will be important conferences in regard to labor shortage. Labor men will state their views to the government and subsequently Hon. T. A. Crerar, minister of agriculture, will meet the representatives of provincial departments of agriculture to consider the question of the shortage of farm help. It is realized that there are but three possible sources of labor supply. It is possible that men can be secured from the United States with the consent of Washington. The services of aliens now in internment camps might be conscripted, or Chinese laborers might be permitted to enter the Dominion to provide help both for the farmers and the railways until the war is over. The latter proposal has already been made to the government by the railway war board. Doubtless it will be strongly opposed by the labor organizations, but the government in arriving at a decision will have more regard for the food necessities of the Allies and the people as a whole than the wishes of any one class in the community.

An interesting official statement showing the number of soldiers for overseas so far secured under the Military Service act was made public this week by the government. It is rather disappointing to the expectations of those who thought that Quebec province would be hard hit by the application of the act. The statement shows the record of draftees secured so far in the various provinces to be as follows: Ontario, 25,812; Quebec, 5,108; Nova Scotia, 5,267; New Brunswick, 3,960; Prince Edward Island, 581; Saskatchewan, 8,313; Alberta, 7,596; British Columbia, 6,812. In Quebec, of the 17,104 men who registered, only 1,397 did not claim exemption, and but 3,711 of those who did have been disallowed. Quebec's record may, however, be greatly improved in the future because of the fact that the military authorities have entered more than 22,000 appeals against the exemptions granted by local tribunals. The figures are not those of men actually drafted but of men found to be fit for service and under orders to report when called upon to do so by the military authorities.

Freight Rate Appealed

The Manitoba government got a quick decision from the railway board in regard to its application for leave to take an appeal from the recent judiciously increasing freight and passenger rates. When the case came up on Thursday F. H. Chrysler, K.C., made the application in a very brief speech. The desire for an appeal, he said, was based upon legal grounds, the government taking exception to that portion of the rates judgment which asserts that the board is not bound by the agreement made some years ago between the provincial authorities and the C.N.R. giving the government a measure of control over rates. Mr. Chrysler confined his argument to the legal aspect of the question.

Counsel for the railways, F. H. Phippen, K.C., representing the C.N.R., and E. W. Beatty, chief counsel for the C.P.R., while challenging the right of appeal on legal grounds were also opposed to the application for other reasons. They argued that at least two of the Canadian railway systems are in a bad way and that any delay in bringing the increased rates into operation would be a serious matter for them. They urged that in the event of leave

to appeal being granted the rates should go into effect on February 1, the date fixed by the board, in order that the railways would get the increased earnings.

Sir Henry Drayton, on behalf of the board, granted this request and also gave the Manitoba government the right to appeal to the supreme court. In doing so he said the new schedules might be subject to certain modifications because of special representations that had been made to the board on behalf of the grain, lumbering and other interests who claimed that heavy losses would be sustained on the basis of contracts already entered into if the rates were put into effect as early as proposed.

F. O. Fowler, of the Northwest Grain Dealers' association, in asking that the grain rates should not become operative until June 1, said that if the new rates went into effect at the end of the present month the grain men would sustain a loss of \$349,987. The loss on wheat alone to the dealers would be \$253,539. There would be no escape from this loss because the price of wheat had been fixed.

In reply to Commissioner Scott, who asked if it would not be possible for the board of grain supervisors to increase the price of wheat a cent, Mr. Fowler said that even this would not affect the price paid for wheat already



A WESTERN FUR CATCHER
By Wilmer South, Douglaston, Sask.

in the elevators. Dr. Magill, secretary of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, volunteered the information that an increase in the price of wheat would not be possible because the price had been fixed by agreement with the Allies and the government of the United States. W. B. Lanigan, for the C.P.R., strongly objected to the proposals of the grain men. They had known for months, he argued, that the railways had applied for an increase in rates. The new rates represented an advance of a little over one cent a bushel but the twenty million bushels of wheat now ready for movement in the west could nearly all be taken care of before they would go into effect.

Somewhat similar representations were made on behalf of the lumbermen, who claim that they have about 1,500 carloads of lumber ready for shipment for which cars could not be secured. There would be a big loss on these shipments if the new rates went into effect before they were moved. Judgment was deferred in regard to both grain and lumber rates. The livestock interests who have also entered a complaint against the immediate enforcement of the new schedules were not represented.

The Soldier's Vote

The counting of the soldiers' vote is under way both across the sea and in Canada. It will be some weeks yet before all the figures will be in hand. The

government expects that when the soldiers' vote is added to the home vote a considerable number of seats now in the opposition column will change over. A majority of as much as 70 for the government is predicted in some quarters. Definite results are not likely to be announced before the first week in February and parliament will not meet before March. Wednesday, March 6, is considered to be the earliest possible date for the opening as the election writs are not returnable until February 28. A comparatively short but business like session is expected. There have been rumors of the retirement of Sir Wilfrid Laurier from the leadership of the opposition, but it is generally understood here that he will continue to lead, at least during the first session of the new parliament.

OTTAWA GRAIN CONFERENCE

At a conference of grain men in Ottawa last week it is computed upon careful estimates that there are 105,000,000 bushels of wheat still available, including Canadian wheat in store across the border. This includes low grade grain. Thirty millions are required for seed in the west. About thirty millions are needed for home use on the old basis of consumption. In addition a considerable quantity will be required for seed in eastern Canada since it is proposed that the eastern provinces grow enough wheat to feed themselves in the future.

Available Wheat in West

The exportable surplus has not yet been fully ascertained. However, orders have already gone forth whereby all the wheat available of the Grand Trunk Pacific shall be placed in the new government elevator at Transcona and all the wheat available on the Canadian Northern lines west of Saskatoon shall be placed in the Saskatoon elevator for the Wheat Export company. The amount available under these two orders alone is estimated at over 10,000,000 bushels. The estimate of 67,000,000 bushels in the west is said to be exclusive of seed.

The railway commission is already providing for the greatest possible rail movement eastward which the available supply of cars will permit.

The seed required to place the eastern provinces on a self-supporting basis after the harvest of this year will be supplied by the seed commissioner along similar lines to those adopted in connection with certain western districts in the past year. Just how much will be required can only be ascertained after a further survey of the situation.

Increase Milling Percentage of Wheat

The milling percentage of wheat retained in the flour is to be increased from the present maximum of 72 to a minimum of 74.

It is anticipated that every effort will be made to secure a substitute in the shape of corn. A member of the food control branch is now in the United States endeavoring to ascertain the amount of corn which might be available for export to Canada for both human use and for feed.

The food controller's branch is also considering the question of fixing the price of flour. Profits on milling are now defined, but the price of flour is not. The factor which is not yet ascertainable in connection with the calculation of cost is the cost of "carrying over" available wheat until August 31 next. The fixing of the price of wheat and the elimination of the element of speculation from the trade has also eliminated the incentive for private corporations or individuals "carrying" wheat.

The question of financing the available supply until paid for by the allies or the Canadian consumer has to be faced. It is understood the government and the millers will co-operate in providing a "carrying fund" for the purpose. The price of the wheat, the carrying cost, and the milling cost, must all be taken into consideration in the fixing of flour prices.

The British house of lords on January 10 rejected Lord Loreburn's amendment to the representation of the people bill by which it was sought to exclude women from the franchise. The vote against the amendment was 134 to 69.