

Conditions in the West

By E. CORA HIND.

WINNIPEG, Man., June 14th.

Winnipeg has been given over to conventions this present week. The Retailers' Association and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association have been much in the lime light, and in addition the Canada Grain Commission has held sittings here to which possibly 150 representatives came from outside points. Then, too, it has been registration week in the city of Winnipeg and the larger towns of the province, and this has possessed a special interest owing to the fact that the newly enfranchised women have been registering for the first time, and in passing it may be remarked that they are registering in very large numbers. There is a feeling in the air that there will be a Dominion election before very long, and the announcement of Sir Robert Borden late last week of granting the federal franchise to the women of Canada, has further stimulated interest. Last but by no means least, the actual personnel of the new board of grain supervisors of Canada has been declared; the order in council granting them their power has been published and it is expected that the first meeting will take place on Saturday and at the latest by Monday. It will be seen from the foregoing that Winnipeg has not lacked for either entertainment or interest during the present week.

With regard to the Manufacturers' Association, possibly one of the most important things coming before that body is the statement of Professor Rutan that almost immediately, means for utilizing the lignite coal that abounds in the Prairie Provinces will be established. He stated that the necessary equipment could be put in for \$400,000, and was immediately told by ex-Mayor Deacon, head of one of the large steel construction plants here, that that amount could be raised in Winnipeg in a few hours. The coal situation is looming very seriously, as whatever else the west may do without, it cannot do without an abundance of fuel. If our own lignite coal could be utilized, it will not only be much cheaper, but there will be an enormous amount of saving in haulage, as at present the greater proportion of the fuel used in the Prairie Provinces is anthracite coal from the United States.

Another matter which is receiving a great deal of attention from both Manufacturers and Retailers, is the proposed advance in freight rates. It is one of those curious situations that so frequently occur in life, and which those who take part in them so rarely see the humor of. Everything that the Railway companies use has advanced in price since the war, their wage bill alone has been enormously increased and in addition to advances in wages, the employees have secured shorter hours, thus increasing the number of employees necessary for the efficient operation of the roads. All the merchants and manufacturers who use the railways for transportation have advanced their prices on all classes of commodities with the war as a recognized and legitimate excuse, and yet, all of these organizations of union labor, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers are protesting loudly against any advance in freight charges. Either one of two things will prove true, either the railway companies were robbing us right and left under the old tariff, or they are entitled to an advance under new conditions; and they must either have this advance or the roads will suffer in efficiency. It is only necessary to do a little prospecting around American roads to find out where the reduction in rates south of the line has limited their transportation. In a recent visit to Minneapolis, your correspondent was discussing this phase of the situation with one of the big millers of that city and also with one of the leading grain men, and both of them made the remark that the railways of the United States, if they were to meet the requirements of transportation under war conditions would assuredly have to receive government aid, as they were all more or less in financial difficulties. These things should give pause to wild clamorings for freight rates to remain where they were. It would seem from these statements re American roads that prior to the war, Canadian rates had not been excessively high, though there was, undoubtedly, discrimination between the east and west. If they were not too high before the war, they are certainly entitled to an advance under war conditions, if we are not to lose in efficiency. The west wants as cheap freight rates, as it can get, consistent with efficiency, but situated as we are, at such an enormous distance from the sea-board, for

manufacturing centres for the transportation of the the transportation of our raw materials, and from manufactured goods which we require, efficiency of service is more to be desired than a low rate.

The matter before the meeting of the Canada Grain Commission was that of the much discussed question of Sample Markets, and as already stated, the attendance was very large. The Winnipeg Grain Exchange had been asked by the commission to furnish rules and regulations under which they would be prepared to operate a sample market, and this they did, and contented themselves with the presentation of this statement. The railway companies also presented a very strong statement giving details, facts and figures as to what would be the probable delay in movement of grain if sample markets were established. With the exception of these two documents, both of which were admirable in their brevity and clarity of expression, there was nothing but chaos at the meeting. There were a large number of delegates who wanted sample markets at their points, and to sum up the whole situation, it appeared that very few of them were clear as to what would be the effect of a sample market, but if sample markets were going, they wanted to have one, without any regard to whether it was likely to prove a benefit or the reverse. The meeting would have been merely fire-some under any other conditions, but under war conditions and with such serious national problems with regard to food production and control, to say nothing of conscription, facing the nation, the spectacle of over 100 men wasting an entire day in what was little short of piffle, was, to say the least of it, humiliating.

More and more it seems to be born in upon one that Canada does not yet realize that she is at war, and that she is also at a great crisis in her national life. It seems impossible at present, to get any gathering of business men or producers who can think in terms of the nation, and not in terms of their own locality. In the early days of the war, we talked very loudly of "our last man and our last dollar", but the first breath of conscription and the first sign of drain on the individual pocket, has dissipated very much of what we fondly thought in those days was National Spirit. Within sight of the 50th anniversary of Confederation, we are still talking village politics, while a crisis is approaching which may disrupt the entire Confederation, if it is not handled in a right spirit.

GRAIN SUPERVISORS.

With regard to the new Board of Grain Supervisors, it is not worth while to say anything this week, as nothing has yet really been done, but the final appointment of the Board has given a feeling of confidence to the west that has been lacking for some weeks, with regard to the grain situation. There will be many details to work out, and the scheme may not do all its authors hoped for it, but it does seem a move in the right direction. The only matter of surprise here has been the entire elimination of the great export grain interests, and the substitution of Lionel Clarke, of Toronto, whose chief claim to fame in connection with the grain trade is that he advocated the commandeering of the wheat, which caused so much loss and trouble in 1915.

CROPS AND THE WEATHER.

The west has had all kinds of weather during the week. Saturday, June 9th, Sunday, June 10th, were insufferably hot. Saturday reporting considerably over 90 in the shade. With Sunday night came a break in the weather, and Monday brought splendid rains, practically all over the west, and the weather remained warm for quite 12 hours after it started to rain. Then it turned very cool, with considerable wind, and there has been one or two points of frost at a few scattered places in the west. To-day the weather is once more balmy and June-like, and it looks as if the drought had broken, and we were in for more normal June weather.

Reports coming in of the crop since the rain-fall indicate a healthy and fairly rapid development. There is no barking the fact that we are two weeks late, but with favorable weather from now on, and the crop well rooted, there is a good chance, of at least a fair-average crop.

The North West Grain Dealers' Association this week issued the first of their reports on acreage of the new crop, they put the decrease in wheat at 7%, personally, I think that is too little, but I give it to you for what it is worth. Their acreage figures for wheat, oats and barley are: Wheat, 12,750,000 acres; Oats 7,470,000 acres; Barley, 1,400,000 acres.

AREA AND CONDITION OF CANADIAN WHEAT.

Ottawa, June 13, 1917.

The Census and Statistics Office issued to-day a preliminary estimate of the areas sown to grain crops this spring, with a report of their condition on May 31, as compiled from the returns of crop correspondents. The reports from the prairie provinces state that the spring there is very backward, and seeding is consequently late. At the end of May severe frosts cut down the growing wheat plant; but rapid recovery was anticipated. Rain was needed for the germination of the later sown crops and of wheat sown on stubble.

AREA AND CONDITION OF WHEAT.

It is estimated from the reports of correspondents that the total area sown to wheat for 1917 is 13,450,250 acres, as compared with 14,897,000 acres, the area sown, and with 12,900,600 acres, the area harvested in 1916. Thus, the area sown this year, whilst nearly 10 per cent less than the area sown for 1916, is about 4 per cent more than the area harvested for 1916. In arriving at these figures revised returns of the Census of 1916 have been included for Manitoba; for Saskatchewan and Alberta similar revisions have not yet been completed. As compared with the areas sown for 1916, the returns this year indicate small increases under wheat in each of the Atlantic provinces and in British Columbia, and an increase of 25,000 acres in Quebec; but for each of the remaining provinces decreases are reported to the extent of 154,000 acres in Ontario, 254,000 acres in Manitoba; 927,000 acres in Saskatchewan, and 158,000 acres in Alberta. Of the total area under wheat 809,250 acres were sown last fall, and 12,641,000 acres were sown this spring. In the three prairie provinces the total area sown to wheat is estimated at 12,497,550 acres, comprising 2,476,850 acres in Manitoba, 7,605,700 acres in Saskatchewan and 2,415,000 acres in Alberta.

The average condition on May 31 in per cent of the standard representing a full crop is for all wheat for Canada, 84 per cent as compared with 90 per cent on May 31 last year, and with 91 per cent the average condition on the corresponding date for the seven years ended 1916. In the prairie provinces the condition of wheat is 87 per cent of the standard in Manitoba, 80 per cent in Saskatchewan and 92 per cent in Alberta. As converted into a standard of 100 as representing the average condition at the end of May of the past seven years 1910-16 the condition for the whole of Canada of fall wheat is 86, of spring wheat 94, and of all wheat 93 per cent. Thus, according to its reported condition on May 31, the anticipated yield per acre of wheat this year is 7 per cent less than the average of the seven years, 1910-16.

AREA AND CONDITION OF OTHER CROPS.

The decrease in the area sown to wheat this year is partly due to the curtailment of the seeding season by the lateness of the spring, and efforts were therefore apparently directed towards an increase in areas sown to other crops. For oats, the acreage is 11,781,900 acres as compared with 11,376,346 acres, the area sown, and 9,875,346 acres, the area harvested last year. Barley is sown to 1,954,100 acres, as against 1,827,780 acres, the area sown, and 1,681,180 acres, the area harvested in 1916. Rye has a sown area of 159,470 acres, as compared with 147,170 acres in 1916; peas 125,465 acres, compared with 159,680 acres; mixed grains 558,250 acres, as compared with 410,726 acres; hay and clover 7,661,800 acres, against 7,892,932 acres; and alfalfa 84,900 acres, against 89,472 acres. The condition of these crops in per cent of the standard representing a full crop is for oats 85 per cent compared with 90 per cent last year and 93 per cent, the average at the end of May for the seven years, 1910-16; for barley 87 per cent, as against 89 per cent last year and 92 per cent, the seven years' average; for rye 86 per cent against 91 per cent last year, and 89 per cent, the average; for peas 88 per cent, compared with 90 per cent last year and 91, the average; for mixed grains 89 per cent, both this year and last year and 92 per cent, the average; for hay and clover 80 per cent, compared with 98 per cent and 92 per cent, the average.

CONDITIONS IN ALBERTA.

A telegram from the Alberta Department of Agriculture dated June 12 states that the general season is somewhat late, especially between Wetaskiwin and Crossfield. The weather is cool, but crops are doing well. No frost has been reported since June 5. All grain for threshing is sown, but there is 40 per cent for green feed yet to sow. There is plenty of moisture in all parts.

At a Scottish watering place Macpherson was found stretched in a contented mood on the sands, puffing his old pipe. "Come on, Mac," said his companion, "let's go for a sail." "Na, na," replied Macpherson. "I hae had a guid dinner at the cost o' three and saxpence, an' I'm taken na risks."