

AGRICULTURAL WAGE RATE HAS INCREASED

In Great Britain, Wages Have Been Advancing and War Has Enhanced Them Further in Some Sections

QUESTION MUCH DISCUSSED

Most Majority of Farm Workers, it Has Been Shown, However, are Sadly Inadequate for Livelihood—Newspapers Taking Matter Up.

(By W. E. Dowding.)

London, February 18. (By mail).—The rate of agricultural wages in this country is a matter of such direct interest to Canada that I would draw special attention to the subject. It has arisen here in various forms, including a debate in the House of Commons. Before the war it was the principal subject of political controversy, and the Liberal Party was out to gain the country's support for minimum wage legislation. Even in those far-off days (as they seem to us now), many prominent men on the opposite side spoke in favor of higher wages for the farm laborers, although the official party programme differed essentially from that of the Government. The Government proposed legislation making a minimum wage compulsory district by district—not one minimum for the whole country. The Opposition proposed to leave the settlement of the wages to district organizations independent of legislation.

The rival party programmes being withdrawn while war lasts, the Opposition suggests holds the field by virtue of its lack of precision. That is to say, the Opposition are now encouraging farmers to pay more wages voluntarily, and because the party truce makes legislation impossible, the Government has no means at present of carrying out its more definite alternative programme.

Before the war began, agricultural wages were creeping up. Since August there have been many more increases in various parts of the country, but the vast bulk of the agricultural population is in receipt of the same pitifully low wages, although prices are mounting higher. On a wage of 18s to 18s a week there is not much margin to eat into when prices increase.

This state of affairs undoubtedly shocks the social sense of the country. The newspapers are taking the matter up, and last night several prominent Opposition Members of Parliament made utterances like these:—

(1) Mr. R. E. Prothero, the Member for Oxford University, Agent to the Duke of Bedford, and an eminent authority on agriculture, said that prices could not be controlled, and "the only thing to be aimed at now was a rise in wages."

(2) Mr. Austen Chamberlain, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, said, "the friends of the farmers ought to point out to them, that, owing to the war, employment was extremely good, and that labor was short in every great industrial community. Unless farmers could offer greater advantages to labor than they had been able to do in had times, they could not expect to draw the amount of labor they required to the country districts. Although they ought not to over-rate the profits that individuals might make, the higher prices made it easier for the farmer to raise the inducements which he offered to labor, and so to attract fresh labor to agriculture. Higher wages would pay in the long run, because of the increased efficiency."

These are significant words. They are in harmony with the Government attitude, which was expressed by Sir Harry Verney, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, in these words:

"The farmers of this country were not responsible for the high prices. There had been a small rise in agricultural laborers' wages, and he had no doubt that if the wages offered were decent the women would help to cultivate the land. The employment of children should come last. There was nothing so expensive as low-paid labor and the Board of Agriculture would bring its influence to bear to raise the wages and status of agricultural laborers."

And they express the almost unanimous opinion of the country. You may take it as certain, therefore, that the upward trend in agricultural wages here will continue, in spite of the war. When we get back to normal political conditions, the Opposition will be able to point to wage increases without legislation, and to argue that there is accordingly no need for legislation. The Government, on the other hand, will be able to use the present admission that wages are low as an argument in favor of bringing all agricultural employers up to a minimum level, by legislation. The position gained now will have to be secured by legislation because, when prices drop after the war, there will be a tendency to drop wages again, seeing that high prices are the main reason for the present increases. Whichever way it is, life will some day become more attractive to the British peasant, and in considering the future of emigration, this is a point to be borne in mind.

RAW SUGAR UP 19 POINTS.

New York, March 5.—Spot quotation for raw sugars advanced 19 points to 4.77 cents. Federal Co. continues to quote its list price for standard granulated on basis of 6 cents less the usual discount of 2 per cent. for cash. All other refiners still hold their price to basis of 5.76 cents.

LONDON METALS.

London, March 5.—Spot copper £63 10s., up 7s. 6d. Futures £64, up 7s. 6d. Electrolytic £69 5s., up 5s. Spot tin £184, up £2 10s. Futures £162 10s., up 0s. Straits £187, up £4 10s. Sales spot tin 60 tons. Futures 140 tons. Lead £20 6s. 3d., up 2s. 6d. Spelter £44 10s., up 15s.

LOWER PRICE FOR FLOUR.

Calgary, Alta., March 5.—Because of the drop in price of wheat, flour has gone down thirty cents a barrel in all the milling concerns in Alberta.

SPOT WHEAT UNCHANGED.

Paris, March 5.—Spot wheat unchanged from Friday at 1.60%.

COUNTRY BUSINESS IS GOOD CITY TRADE DISPLAY QUIETNESS

Bradstreet's Montreal Weekly Trade Report of March 5th, says:—

When you ask wholesale houses how they find business, they will tell you country business is good; city business limited. This is no doubt accounted for by the fact that farmers are realizing high prices for their hay, grain and other farm products, and have not felt the effects of the war as much as dealers in the large cities. Most of the wholesale milliners had their spring openings this week, which brought a large number of country dealers to the city, who made fairly good purchases. House sales in other trades were reported much better this week, which is accounted for by the large number of outside buyers, who attended the millinery openings. The uncertainty of prices has caused more open orders to be placed than is usual. Advances in freight rates, both by rail and ocean has been a big factor in the trade of the Dominion, and the prices of a number of lines of goods have been temporarily withdrawn for this and other reasons. Butter prices have again advanced this week. Cheese is unchanged, nearly all the transactions being in American cheese, the Canadian make being exhausted. Increased receipts of eggs carried an easier feeling in the market and prices rule lower. An easier feeling in raw sugars curtailed a demand for the refined article, some looking for lower prices, but refiners lists were maintained. Retail trade is a little quieter. Remittances and city collections are fair.

LIVERPOOL COTTON OPENED QUIET.

Liverpool, March 5.—Cotton futures opened quiet prices at 1 to 2 points net decline. Market idle at 12.30 p.m.

Table with columns: Close, Due, Open, and rows for May-June, July-Aug, Oct-Nov, Jan-Feb.

At 12.30 p.m. spots were quiet, prices easier with middlings at 4.99d. Sales were 7,000 bales. Receipts 53,142 bales, including 43,637 American.

Spot prices at 12.45 p.m. were: American middlings fair 5.89d.; good middlings 5.31d.; middlings 4.99d.; low middlings 4.60d.; good ordinary 4.23d.; ordinary 3.99d.

Liverpool, March 5, 2 p.m.—Cotton futures dull at 1/2 point net decline. Sales 7,000 bales including 6,300 American. May-June 488 1/2, July-Aug. 4.88, Oct-Nov. 5.11 1/2, Jan-Feb. 5.18 1/2.

NAVAL STORE MARKET

New York, March 5.—There was a better inquiry for naval stores, especially spirits, which are taken for needs of the trade. The temporary scarcity of spot goods acts as a sustaining factor, though Savannah is steady on a larger volume. Locally spirits were held at 45 to 45 1/2 c. in the trade, with a fair demand.

Tar was repeated at the basis of \$5.50 for kiln burned and 35c. more for retort. Pitch is steady at \$3. Rosins are still quoted at the basis of former prices. Common to good strained is held at \$2.40.

The following were the prices of rosins in the yard: B. \$2.45; C. D. E. F. \$3.55; G. \$3.60; H. \$3.62 1/2; I. \$3.65 to \$2.70; K. \$3.80; M. \$4.50; N. \$5.50; W. G. \$6.05; W. W. \$6.15.

Savannah, Ga., March 5.—Turpentine firm 42c; sales, 200; receipts, 70; shipments, 59; stocks, 33,702. Rosin, firm; sales, 270; receipts, 947; shipments, 1,269; stock, 126,636. Quote: A. B. \$2.92 1/2; C. D. \$3.02 1/2; E. F. G. \$3.05; H. \$3.07 1/2; I. \$3.10; K. \$3.20; M. \$4.00; N. \$5.00; W. G. \$5.45; W. W. \$5.55.

Liverpool, March 4.—Turpentine spirits 41s. 8d. Rosin, common, 11s. 6d. nominal.

WAR CAUSED \$153,823 LOSS IN AMERICAN CANDY EXPORTS.

New York, March 5.—The first five months of the European war brought about a decrease of 153,823 in the value of our American confectionery exports to all parts of the world, compared with the same period of the preceding year, when peace conditions prevailed.

Shipments to our island territories, namely, Porto Rico and the Philippines, have experienced a particularly heavy shrinkage in the period mentioned, according to local candy manufacturers, who ordinarily do a large business in this line with these districts.

During the very first month of the war operations the value of American confectionery shipments to foreign ports realized a decline of \$28,079 in value, as compared with the corresponding month of the previous year.

From that date right down to the close of the year, including the month of December, the latest for which the complete figures are available, the decline in foreign shipments from our ports by the candy manufacturers, was continuous.

While it reached a loss of only slightly over \$28,000 during the month of August, at the close of November there had been comparative monthly net losses amounting to \$37,323.

Taking the export movement of confectionery from our shores to various foreign ports throughout the calendar year of 1914, the value of which amounted to \$1,185,894, there had been a comparative loss of \$174,965, as against the shipments for the calendar year of 1913, most of which it may be seen occurred during the later months when the war was raging abroad.

CANADIAN FAILURES (From Dun's Review)

Again revealing a business mortality considerably in excess of normal, the February insolvency returns for the Dominion of Canada showed a total of 270 commercial defaults, with an aggregate indebtedness of \$7,405,404. These figures compared with 227 failures for \$5,526,070 in the same month last year; 128 for \$1,684,719 in 1913 and 143 in 1912, when the liabilities were only \$963,028. The record for the manufacturing division in February was 65 suspensions and 4, because of the exceptionally large insolvency in the lumber class, the amount involved was swelled to \$4,094,603, as against 54 reverses for \$1,117,886 a year ago; 32 for \$228,832 in 1913 and 28 for but \$197,894 in 1912. While there was 24 more trading defaults than last year, 193 comparing with 169, the aggregate debts of these were \$7,716,697 against \$2,884,729 in the earlier period; in 1913, there were 102 such failures for \$686,887, and the 108 concerns that suspended three years ago owed \$501,424. The group embracing agents, brokers and firms not properly included in either manufacturing or trading contributed 12 insolvencies against 4 each in 1914 and 1913 and 7 in 1912, while the liabilities of \$1,595,104 compared with only \$23,945 a year ago, \$79,500 in 1913 and but \$14,200 in 1912.



MR. R. H. CAMPBELL, Director of Forestry for the Dominion. Mr. Campbell has done such excellent work that despite war time conditions, his appropriation for the Forest Products' Laboratory has been doubled.

THE PRODUCE MARKETS

A good demand continues from all sources for supplies of butter, and although there are no price changes to be noted, the tone holds firm. Fine September creamery . . . 00c to 35c Fine creamery 00c to 34c Seconds 32 1/2c to 33c Manitoba dairy 29c to 30c Western dairy 00c to 30c

A fairly steady business is passing in cheese, and for small lots, the demand is good. Prices hold firm. Finest colored cheese 17 1/2c to 17 3/4c Finest white cheese 17 1/2c to 17 3/4c Finest Eastern cheese 16 1/2c to 17c Undergrades 16 1/2c to 16 3/4c

Business continues in eggs. Trade is moderately active on a fair retail demand for small lots. Strictly fresh stocks 32c to 32c Selected cold storage 27c to 28c No. 1 cold storage 24c to 25c No. 2 cold storage 22c to 23c

The enquiry for beans is fairly good, but on account of the limited supply available on spot buyers find it difficult to fill their wants. The tone of the market is very firm.

One-pound pickers, car lots . . . \$3.15 to \$3.20 Three-pound pickers 3.05 to 3.10 Five-pound pickers 2.95 to 3.00 Undergrades 2.80 to 2.90

The trade in potatoes continues quiet, but there is no change in prices to note, car lots of Green Mountains being quoted at 50c to 52 1/2c per bag ex-track, and sales in a jobbing way were made at 60c, to 65c per bag ex-store.

Spring wheat flour prices weaker, declining 30c per barrel. Prices per barrel: First Patents \$7.80 Second patents 7.30 Strong clears 7.10

Winter wheat flour weaker, declining 40c per barrel. Price per barrel: Choice patents 7.90 Straight rollers 7.40 Millfeed weaker. Bran and shorts declined 11c per ton. Prices per ton: Bran \$25 to \$28 Shorts 27 to 28 Middlings 32 to 33 Moulle, pure 37 to 38 Do., mixed 35 to 36

Baled hay holds steady and quiet. Price per ton: No. 1 hay \$19.50 to \$20.00 No. 2 extra good 18.50 to 19.00 No. 2 hay 17.50 to 18.00

STEEL CONDITIONS QUIET.

New York, March 5.—Conditions in steel are reported quiet. While there is good demand for certain lines, such as tin plate and wire, the volume of business in the first week of March may run considerably below what it was in the corresponding period of last month.

In the first two months consumers bought in order to take advantage of the lower prices, but the advance in prices established so far has not attracted buyers.

THE HIDE MARKET

New York, March 5.—The market for common dry hides were reduced 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 c. in many instances. Orinoco declined to 31c and Puerto Cabellos to 30 1/2 c. Dry and wet salted hides were reduced. Recent sales of wet salted hides have included 4,474 Mexican and 420 Panama.

Table with columns: Bid, Asked, and rows for Orinoco, Laguna, Puerto Cabello, Caracas, Maracaibo, Guatemala, Central America, Ecuador, Bogota, Vera Cruz, Tampico, Tabasco, Tuxpan, Dry Salted Selected, Payta, Maracaibo, Pernambuco, Matamoros, Wet Salted, Vera Cruz, Mexico, Santiago, Cienfuegos, Havana, City slaughtered spreads, Native steers, selected 60 or over, Ditto, branded, Ditto, bull, all weights, Ditto, cow, all weights, Country slaughter, steers 60 or over, Do., cow, Do., bull, 60 or over.

AMERICAN INDEX REFLECTS DOWNWARD PRICE MOVEMENT

Reflecting the declines in the grain markets and the seasonable downward tendency in dairy and garden products, Dun's Number of commodity prices showed a recession to \$124,158 on March 1, as against \$125,662 on February 1 and \$121,771 on March 1, a year ago. On the same date of 1913 the total stood at \$120,461, while in 1912, when wholesale quotations were at a high point, the figures were \$123,527.

Although five of the seven divisions into which the Index is divided, for economy of space, revealed an upward trend last month, the articles of most general consumption took an opposite course and exerted the greater effect, the most pronounced change occurring in the dairy and garden group. Thus, this class showed a reaction from \$17,464 at the beginning of February to \$15,580 on March 1, as a result of cheaper butter, eggs, potatoes, cheese, hay and a few other products. The collapse of wheat options, following the news of the progress made by the allied fleets in forcing the Dardanelles, was only partially reflected in the cash markets, but corn, oats, and rye also declined, so that bread-stuffs, as a whole, fell from \$29,652 to \$28,606.

In no single instance did the Index Number show a note-worthy advance, the most important alteration in this respect being in "other food", which rose to \$10,822 against \$10,478 on February 1. This was due almost wholly to the higher cost of sugar, malt and tobacco, which combined to offset the price recessions elsewhere; provisions went up moderately because of dearer beef, sheep and hogs, while the clothing division advanced slightly in response to enhanced values of raw wool and silk and leather. Similarly, there was a small rise in the metal group as a result of the increases in copper, tin and lead, and the miscellaneous class also moved upward because of the effects produced by the war on certain drugs and chemicals.

The following table gives Dun's Index Number for March 1, with comparison for earlier days:

Table with columns: Mar. 1, 1915, Feb. 1, 1915, Mar. 1, 1914, Mar. 1, 1913, and rows for Breadstuffs, Meat, Dairy and Garden, Other Food, Clothing, Metals, Miscellaneous, Total.

THE HOP MARKET

New York, March 5.—The demand for English account for hops on the Pacific Coast appears to have subsided for the time being, and no further business has been reported. There is no indication, however, of any desire on the part of growers to stimulate business by means of reduced prices, on the contrary they are holding firmly at former figures.

The quotations below are between dealers in the New York market, and an advance is usually obtained from dealers to brewers:—

States, 1914—Prime to choice, 14 to 16. Medium to prime, 12 to 14. 1913 nominal—Old, olds, 7 to 8. German, 1914—35 to 38. Pacifics, 1914—Prime to choice, 15 to 16. Medium to prime, 13 to 14. 1913—9 to 11. Old olds, 7 to 8. Bohemian, 1914—36 to 40.

ARMY CONTRACTS ARE HOLDING ATTENTION

Day and Night Shifts are Being Worked at Huddersfield and Overtime Scale is Extensive

OTHER BUSINESS BETTER

Output in this Connection is About Three times as Great as Two Months Ago.—Demand Comes from Foreign Markets.—Canadian Demand Poor.

(Special to Journal of Commerce.)

Huddersfield, Feb. 17.—(By mail).—There is a maintenance of the recent pressure in mills, due to the exceptional weight of contracts of cloth for the Army and the result is that spinning and other machinery is being run day and night, and in several departments overtime on an extensive scale is still necessary. The unfortunate dispute which has arisen regarding overtime pay is likely to be settled in the near future, but employers see no prospect of conceding the operatives' demand for a reduction in working hours, many firms having Army contracts in hand which will last for months to come even with a continuance of the present high state of activity.

A number of the fine worsted manufacturers report a revival in regular business. The extent of this may be judged from the fact that in several cases the output is now equal to that of two or three days a week, while a couple of months ago it was represented by the producing power of a single day a week. This improvement is all the more gratifying since it arises not only from home but foreign market.

Of the latter the more notable are the United States, where there is a distinctly better feeling, and neutral Continental countries. The demand for Italy is worthy of special mention because in the past this market has been only an indifferent one for fine fancy worsteds. The orders and inquiries now being received are very satisfactory, and there appears to be every likelihood of future business being on a much larger scale than before. Most of the business passing in worsteds is in goods for next winter. There is no change as regards tweeds, stocks in the hands of merchants being very small, and manufacturer are unable to cope with their insistent demands owing to the pressure of Army work. The overseas trade in tweeds is very disappointing, the Canadian demand being much below the average. The wholesale clothing trade is busy, chiefly with khaki uniforms, but ordinary business on Easter account is very slow.

There is little chance in the wool market, the feature still being a large demand for crossbred, prices of which remain very high.

SHIPMENTS OF GRAIN.

New York, March 5.—Argentine weekly cable to produce exchange says: Shipments of wheat 5,193,000 bushels; corn, 1,212,000 bushels; oats, 1,070,000 bushels. Argentina wheat visible increased 1,656,000, corn decreased 391,000 bushels.

FRANCE ORDERS GOODS IN CANADA.

London, March 5.—Orders amounting to over \$5,000,000 for artillery and harness have been placed in Canada by the French Government through the High Commissioner's Office here.

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