

Potash Notes

The Antioch News is authority for the statement that the fight for control of potash lakes on state school lands may yet become centered between the Western Potash Company, with plant at Antioch, and the Omaha Potash Company with plant at Lakeside, with the Alliance Potash Company as an interested spectator and possible participant. Now that the state supreme court has ruled that all bids must be advertised for and that the interpretation placed on the law by the court must be followed it is very probable that bids will be advertised for shortly after the incoming administration takes the reins or it is possible that an attempt may be made to amend that law and that the awarding of leases may be held off until after the coming session of the legislature.

The Antioch News of last week also contained an interesting article on the relation of potash to fertilizers. This article was in part as follows:

While with producers of potash, its uses, disposition and distribution is familiar with the general public, only a vague idea as to how it enters as a fertilizer is entertained by them. This article may or it may not be of public interest, but is published for what it is worth based upon facts. There is but one section in the United States where cotton can be produced successfully and profitably and that is the great cotton producing states of the south. After upwards of two centuries continuous use of the land for growing cotton, it is natural that artificial means must aid the soil. Fertilizers can be manufactured for enrichment of the soil that would cause the cotton stalks grow taller than a man's head, but without potash as one of the ingredients, it would prove valueless for potash is the only substance known that will cause the cotton to fruit and therefore cotton and potash is so indissolubly linked together that without potash, no cotton could be raised at least in the United States. The process of manufacture of fertilizer for the produc-

tion of cotton, is a mixture of phosphate, cotton seed meal, fish scrap, blood and bone, kainit, sulphuric acid and potash. Factories with appropriate machinery grind all of these substances into a constituency not unlike the final substance coming from our own potash factories, and sacked in a manner similar it is commonly known as guano. After the fields are properly prepared, the plow making the furrows is followed by an agricultural implement distributing the guano into the furrow and this is followed by the cotton planter drilling the seed into the furrow on top of the guano, followed by a harrow. We have reports on the quantity of potash used annually only from the one state of Georgia, but it being a fair average for the other states, some idea of the tonnage of potash required for this one particular purpose may be obtained from multiplying the quantity given for this one state by twelve. The figures are obtained from the fourth annual report of the Commissioner of Commerce and Labor and is given as follows:

Number of establishments	260
Capital and investment	\$41,200,000
Tons of phosphate	379,115
Tons cotton seed meal	61,043
Tons fish scrap	5,364
Tons blood and bone	21,432
Tons of kainit	26,384
Tons sulphuric acid	122,200
Tons of potash	30,625
Total tons raw material	646,203
Total value	\$13,973,000
Total tons manufactured products	738,962
Total value of manufactured products	\$20,550,480

As stated above this is for but one of the twelve cotton states, a fair presumption being that each of them require at least the same, which would make the total tonnage of potash used in this industry alone 367,900 tons annually.

It will not be far out of the way to estimate the total tonnage of potash produced in the whole of south Sheridan county annually as 200,000, which is a conservative estimate. Thus far it has not been shown that products from California plants cut any very great figure in the total estimates.

The figures given above relate only to the fertilizer industry and has

nothing to do with the many other industries in which potash enters as a necessary ingredient.

In a pamphlet compiled by Hoyt S. Gale, director of the U. S. Geological Survey, and published in the News issue of December 20, 1917, other industries in which potash enters as an important ingredient are: soap and laundry; manufacture of glass; matches; explosives and black powder; tanning; dyeing; metallurgy; electrotyping; photography; merical and miscellaneous chemicals used and many other necessities and desires of commercial life and while it would require much time and vast research to ascertain the number of tons annually used for these other industries, yet it is certain enough used to greatly exceed the production thus far in the United States. The more that is produced in America, and the nearer the production comes to supplying the demand, the better prospects there are for securing national legislation that will prevent importations at prices less than it can be produced in America, and there is no danger of the plants now in operation producing too much potash. All the bunk published and thrown broadcast by fertilizer trust as to limited demand for potash is for the purpose of discouraging investments and production in our own country and the principle of preference in America for American products is to firmly grounded in the people to tolerate any discrimination in the matter of foreign importations.

By the decision of the Nebraska supreme court, handed down on Saturday, December 14th, the validity of the mineral leasing law, passed at the special session in the spring of 1918 of the state legislature, is held by T. L. Briggs, representative-elect from this district, loses in his contention that the state award the potash mineral leases to him, and the court says that the state board may award no leases until the letter of the new law is strictly followed and bids advertised for and awarded in open competition.

The suit on which the decision was rendered was brought by Briggs in the Lancaster county district court, which decided that he, as the holder of the agricultural and grazing lease, would be materially damaged if the mineral lease were awarded to others. The district court decided in his favor and the case was at once carried to the supreme court.

The supreme court says that the state board of educational lands and funds must advertise for bids on all school lands for the mineral leases; that they have not the right to award new leases to the holders of leases granted in 1917 without going into open bidding; that the lessee of the mineral rights cannot interfere in any respect with the rights of the agricultural lessee to his damage without providing for an satisfying such damages. The fact that the law does not provide a means of ascertaining these damages does not matter; if they cannot be made by agreement a court of equity can take jurisdiction.

The claim had been made, in an effort to influence the court, that Representative Lloyd Thomas of Alliance, who was one of the introducer of the mineral leasing law, was interested in the leases on school lands on which the potash lakes were located. The court was not deceived by this attempt to mislead it. Mr. Thomas had no interest in the school land leases and his only desire was to secure a fair, equitable law. The decision of the court is a vindication of his efforts to do so.

The court further declares that the state board should call for competitive bids as the statutes contemplate and the holders of the invalid leases may bid with others and specify in their bids the amount of bonus and royalty provided in the former contracts. If they are not the successful bidders the legislature will give them back the money previously expended by them. It also says that a mineral leaseholder cannot be deprived of rights thereunder by unreasonable demands of the holder of the agricultural lease. The legislature will meet soon and it is desired to apply the power of eminent domain to get back

the lands thus leased by payment of damages to the holder of the agricultural lease this may be done. The supreme court says the Lancaster court was wrong when it enjoined the board from issuing mineral leases save only to Briggs until his agricultural lease expired, and remands the case for action under its findings.

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