

The total cargo passing through the three canal systems amounted to 109,800,000 tons in 1958 and 119,630,000 tons in 1959 as compared with the record reached in 1953 of about 145,000,000 tons. During 1959 approximately 88,170,000 tons moved eastward and 31,460,000 tons westward. Freight traffic on the Welland Canal was 6,230,000 tons or 29.3 p.c. higher than in 1958 and on the St. Lawrence canals 9,450,000 tons or 80.3 p.c. higher. The major increases occurred in the movement of iron ore and agricultural products.

On the other hand, traffic passing through the Sault Ste. Marie canals in 1959 was 5,830,000 tons, 7.6 p.c. lower than in 1958. A striking feature of the freight traffic picture is the volume passing through the latter canals compared with that going down river through the St. Lawrence canals, emphasizing again the difference in the amount of traffic on the Great Lakes compared with that on the St. Lawrence. Most of the traffic at Sault Ste. Marie passes through the four United States locks—of the total traffic of 70,920,000 net tons in 1959 only 1,230,000 tons passed through the Canadian lock. Noteworthy also is the predominance of iron ore shipments which amounted to more than the shipments of all other products through the Sault Ste. Marie canals. Coal and agricultural products, the latter mainly Canadian, accounted for more than 82 p.c. of the remaining traffic.

About 8,500,000 tons of the 27,500,000 tons of through and way traffic on the Welland Canal in 1959 passed from United States ports to Canadian ports. Soft coal (4,600,000 tons) and iron ore (1,800,000 tons) were the main items. Canadian coastal shipments accounted for nearly 6,700,000 tons, of which 4,380,000 tons were grain, and United States coastal trade for about 1,000,000 tons. Canadian shipments to the United States totalled 6,800,000 tons of which iron ore (5,260,000 tons) and newsprint and wood pulp (440,000 tons) were the main items. American overseas freight traffic amounted to about 3,500,000 tons and Canadian to about 550,000 tons.

Of the total traffic of 21,220,000 tons passing through the St. Lawrence canals in 1959, Canadian coastal trade accounted for nearly 8,100,000 tons of which grain from the Prairie Provinces made up nearly 3,800,000 tons, iron ore 1,280,000 tons, and petroleum and gasoline 810,000 tons. Canadian freight traffic to the United States accounted for 5,660,000 tons of which the largest item was iron ore (4,980,000 tons). American freight traffic to Canadian ports amounted to 1,760,000 tons of which soft coal (730,000 tons) was the principal commodity. About 900,000 tons were direct overseas shipments from Canada and a small amount moved in United States coastal trade. A great portion of the remaining freight traffic was United States overseas trade.

Agricultural products such as wheat, barley, corn, rye, flaxseed, flour and other mill products are the most important group of Canadian commodities moving by way of the St. Lawrence system from the Prairie Provinces to eastern parts of the country for domestic and export markets. The downbound movement of corn through the Welland and St. Lawrence canals comes from western Ontario and the United States. There is only light traffic in flour through any of the canals since this commodity is usually moved by rail.

Until the opening of the Seaway the only grain-carrying vessels reaching Montreal and Quebec were canallers with 100,000-bu. capacity but the Seaway now permits the passage of large upper lakers carrying about 800,000 bu. As a consequence, unloading facilities designed for canallers have required modification. The National Harbours Board in 1959 built eight special plants (six at Montreal and two at Quebec City) incorporating the belt-and-bucket elevator which dredges grain out of the hold and pneumatic equipment which sucks up the grain. These new plants give close to a 50-p.c. higher unloading rate (each has a rated maximum capacity of 27,000 bu. per hour) using only about half as many men as the standard type.

In July 1960 a new grain terminal was placed in operation at Baie Comeau on Quebec's north shore where ships carrying wheat from the Great Lakes may unload and pick up iron ore for the return trip. This, Canada's newest shipping centre, has an elevator capacity of 11,868,000 bu.; loading is accomplished by means of twin high-speed belts from the warehouse to 12 overhead spouts which drop grain into the ships at the rate of 100,000 bu.