

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

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British Columbia Business Review.

FEBRUARY 9.

At a meeting of the council of the Victoria board of trade several important matters were discussed. The proposition of the Vancouver board of trade looking to a bonus of the ship building industry by the govt. was not looked upon with favor, as the Dominion government already bonuses ship building to the extent 75c per ton, and an additional \$5 would be rather generous bonusing. It was facetiously asked to whom the vessel would belong when completed. A communication was received explaining the *modus operandi* of dealing with insolvents in the state of California, which opened the old subject up of a bankruptcy law for discussion, which ended in the Dominion government being petitioned to frame a suitable measure. Subscriptions towards the new building fund were reported satisfactory. Hon. J. H. Turner advocated sending suitable literature regarding British Columbia to be placed on the library tables of the trans-Atlantic steamers. In answer to an enquiry from England it was thought the prospect for chemical works was excellent.

It is satisfactory to know that the hop industry is progressing favorably. A company composed of F. Raith, D. McLellan, Hiram Hyde, George McKeen, and A. M. Innes, of Westminster, has been formed and are asking tenders for supplies for their ranch on the Coquitlam river, about six miles from the city. It is the intention to plant ten acres in hops this spring.

Mr. Byers, manager of the Galena Trading Co., the headquarters of which is Pilot Bay, is reported as anticipating fifteen thousand persons going into the Kootenay country in the spring. A smelter costing \$250,000 has been started and will be completed next September. Mr. Byers is reported as saying that the ore in sight is sufficient to keep a smelter constantly in operation. Apropos of the above is the rather important announcement by H. Abbott, general superintendent of the Pacific division of the C.P.R., that his company has several branch lines in contemplation. During the present week surveys for a road from Revelstoke to the head of Arrow Lake will be undertaken. The distance is twenty-eight miles and no engineering difficulties to be encountered. Ultimately communication will be established with the whole of the Kootenay district.

Reports from up country are to the effect that cattle have wintered well and that there are a good many more for beef purposes than was at first supposed. It appears that ranchers have been holding for higher prices, representations being made that the supply was limited. As a consequence, the dealers on the coast made contracts east of the mountains for their March, April and May meats. This was scarcely anticipated and now ranchers are offering freely rather than feed their stock for the balance of the winter. It is probable that some of the stock will be disposed of, but not all. The wholesale price has advanced one cent all round.

Reports from the sealers already out have been somewhat discouraging. The weather has been very heavy and the catch light.

H. P. Bell, of Valdivia, Chili, writes to the *Colonist* advocating the Abt. Rock railway system as peculiarly adapted to the interior of British Columbia as its capacity for interior of British Columbia as its capacity for inclination is from nothing to 45 degrees and the cost reduced one-third. In regard to a railway into

Cariboo, his scheme would be to run a steamer from the Canadian Pacific railway at Kamloops to the head of navigation on the Clearwater river and thence by climbing the intervening ridge to Quesnell lakes by the Abt. system, using a steamboat for the lake traffic and joining the north end of these lakes with Barkerville by another stretch of the Abt. Rock railway system. The total distance of railway is 80 miles and the approximate cost of the whole system \$2,500,000.

Reports from Nanaimo show a decided improvement in the mining outlook and consequently an improvement in business, which has been somewhat dull. There has been an increase in the output for January over December, and the market looks better. Business generally, however, throughout the province continues quiet. Collections are slow and money tight; wholesale merchants particularly complain and especially of the country business, which has been unusually flat. One or two assignments have occurred as the result of depression and several more are anticipated, but, as has been said previously, prospects are bright for the coming summer and no anxiety is felt.

Rumors about the Northern Pacific are taking more or less definite shape. It is announced that a by-law will be introduced in the Vancouver city council, having in view a substantial bonus. A railway charter obtained last session of the legislature, it is said, will be utilized for the purpose and a water front has already been secured for terminal facilities. The extension of the Great Northern from Westminster to Vancouver is also on the tapis and it is thought the above *coup de main* of the Northern will inspire a similar and speedy move on the part of the latter.

A letter received at this end from Mr. Edgar Tripp, commissioner for Trinidad, speaks hopefully of a direct trade between British Columbia and the West India Islands. Through rates have been granted in connection with C. P. R., Grand Trunk and the St. John line of steamers, which discounts the rates via New York by 12½ cents per 100 pounds. In those articles which we depend upon each other coming from and going to the West Indies and which are now carried circuitously there is no reason, he thinks, why a direct trade should not be established, and suggests a route via the Horn for cheapness. While sailing vessels do a profitable trade with England, they do not as a rule go out of their course, and unless a direct charter could be obtained would not call, but if the talked of line of steamers to San Francisco be accomplished, then shipments could be made. Mr. Tripp says British Columbia lumber has found its way to the West Indies through the United States classed as white pine. Talking of the export of lumber to the United States, a meeting of the council of the Vancouver board of trade, the other evening, discussed the protection of our lumber interests. Southern pine, similar to ours, was admitted into Eastern Canada free, while there was a duty on British Columbia pine going into the United States. It was thought only fair that Canada should impose a duty equal to that imposed by the United States.

Real estate in some sections of the province is showing indications of activity. In Vancouver a syndicate has purchased a large number of lots formerly held on building conditions, from the C.P.R., and is now offering them for sale. Recently, the town sites of Barclay, Alberni, Pilot Bay, and others have been laid out and a spring movement is anticipated.

Business in local produce is likely to improve shortly upon the re-opening of Frazer river navigation. In the five or six weeks the weather has been delightfully fine and it has improved the general tone, and building, etc., has been more active as a consequence.

Oats, \$32.50 per ton; barley (bright), \$32 per ton; second grade, \$27.50 per ton. In car lots, bulk oats are \$25 and in sack, \$26.50; wheat, in bulk, \$28, in sacks, \$30; barley chop, \$27.

There is no change in flour and feed. Jobbing sales are: Manitoba Hungarian, \$5.75; strong bakers', \$5.50; Oregon, \$6 to \$6.25; Spokane, \$3.75; Enderby \$5.75 three star, \$5.35 two star. Hay, \$16 to \$16. California oatmeal, \$4.25, Canadian, \$3.50. California rolled oats, \$3.00, Canadian, \$3.50; California cornmeal, \$3.25; chop feed, \$3.1; bran, \$2.3; shorts, \$2.5; oats, \$28 to \$30; wheat, \$33 to \$38, oil ake, \$40. There has been a noticeable improvement in business in this line. Manitoba flour is still easy. Local prices in Victoria for grain feed are higher in most instances than those quoted. Rolled oats are supplied by the National mills at \$3 to \$3.25 per sack; oatmeal at \$3.50 per 100 lbs. The local supply of grains is limited.

Vegetables are scarce and dear. Potatoes are weakening in price. Large quantities of Sound potatoes are being imported in Victoria. The local supply is not keeping well. Frazer valley are selling at \$18 a ton and Ashcroft \$23. Turnips and carrots are quoted 60c cwt; onions, Frazer river, 1½c, Ashcroft, 3c. Dealers who hold potatoes this year in anticipation of a raise have met heavy losses. The warm, open winter has prevented their keeping.

Stocks of butter in creamery are good which is steady at from 27c to 29c according to quality. The dealers are loaded up with Manitoba dairy and a good deal of complaint is made as to its quality. It is quoted from 20 to 22c. Robt. Scott, of Shoal Lake, Man., has just sent in a carload of butter, for which sale is likely to be slow. A telegram from San Francisco quotes fancy rolls at 32c, and some of it has already been received in Victoria where it is a favorite article. The best grades of California butter is of very fine quality and eastern dealers must not affect to despise it. It will be in the market about the first of March. It is put up tastefully in rolls of 56 to 60 to the 100 lbs. Cheese is stiffening up and is firm at 13c, Stilton 38c, Swiss 40c. Eastern fresh and limed eggs are scarce. The latter is quoted at 21 to 23c. A carload of fresh eastern is on the way for which prices are expected to be up. Fresh laid eggs are coming in freely and are selling all the way from 25c to 40c according to degree of freshness.

The market in meats, which was glutted a few weeks ago, is much firmer. Quotations are: Heavy hams, 13 to 13½c; breakfast bacon, do.; backs, 12½ to 12¾c; short rolls, 11½c; long clear, 11c; lard in tubs and pails, 13 to 13½c, in tins 13½ to 13¾c.

Oranges are on the decline and not in demand, Riverside seedlings being offered at \$2.75, and Navels at \$4. Japanese oranges are no more to be had. The market is bare of apples. Oregon apples are quoted from \$1.15 to \$1.25. There are a few Eastern apples at \$5.50 and upwards. A car load is expected shortly and will probably sell as high as \$6. California lemons at \$4.25 to \$4.50, ank Scillies at \$8 and upwards.

There is very little fish in the market. The B. C. Fishing and Trading company has received some per the Iona, and a cargo of halibut is expected on the Eliza Edwards. Quotations are: Salmon, 10c; black cod, 6c; halibut (depends on catch), 7c and 8c; herring, 5c; smelts, 6c; soles, 8c, flounders, 5c and 6c. The Iona on her last trip got a small supply of loil, heretofore unknown in these waters, prawns, mussels, cockerels, shrimps, etc., she being equipped with the most improved English trawl. The market, however, depends entirely upon the immediate supply and jobbing prices are higher than those quoted. Smoked salmon is quoted, 15c; salt salmon, \$8.25 per bbl; smoked halibut, 10c; stretched halibut, 6c. Game is scarce and almost out of the market.

Remarks have already been made on the fresh meat supply. Wholesale prices have advanced this week one cent, and went up at Calgary on the first of the month. Dressed meats are now quoted: Beef, 9c; mutton, 13c and 13½; pork, 11½c. For live it is as follows: Steers, 4½ and 5c; cows, 3½c; calves, 7½c; hogs, 7½c.