

Canada's Great Shipbuilding Problem

Government Assistance in the Form of Subsidies should, in the Opinion of the Author, be Granted in the Development of a Merchant Marine

By GEORGE TYLER.

Whatever may be the daily fluctuations of battle, the defeat of Germany is now assured. We must prepare to meet the German trade menace after the war, not only with a view to wresting from Germany the position she was complacently allowed to occupy, but also of securing for Canada the full advantages of trade and commerce.

Out of all the vast seething change of the past two years there will arise an incalculably greater industrial and agricultural demand than ever existed in the past. That is one tremendously important fact that emerges out of the war. All the war devastated countries will look to the British Empire to supply their requirements. Their new railways, bridges, steel buildings, factory equipment, electric power stations, tramway systems, gas and steam engines to mention only a few on the list.

If our factories were as they were before the war we should be quite incapable of meeting any demand, but the wonderful changes made in our works during the war give us every chance of profiting by this trade, and there is in our admirably equipped factories the opportunity for trade development at present undreamed of, as soon as the war is over.

Increasing over Export Trade

Amidst the confusion of new economic problems, new obligations, another fact stands out clearly and cannot too strongly be insisted upon, that our position of economic advantage depends upon our capacity for increasing our export trade. We can only increase our national income by increasing the amount of goods and food which we sell over the seas.

This question is of such urgent and momentous import to Canada that unmistakable measures must be taken to secure its solution. We must push on now, every day that passes before the war ends, and the world's markets again accessible to Germany, being of supreme importance.

It is essential that this should be realised by our business men, and there are many who have not in the past grasped to the full their opportunities for overseas trade. By making every possible preparation for its future, by devoting his attention more closely than ever before to export trade, the manufacturer is serving the highest interests of the country.

Large Expansion of Merchant Shipping Needed.

After the war is over it will be our turn to anticipate the world's requirements, to carry scientific methods into every workshop, to capture new markets, where once Germany was a successful competitor. For this we imperatively need a large expansion of merchant shipping and material production. Export trade and indispensable supplies demand it; without it, the war will be for us an industrial failure.

Anyone who reflects for a moment must realise that the time has arrived when Canada must be prepared for transportation by sea. The mercantile marine of the nations of the world is gradually being diminished by the events of the war, and the need of shipping facilities for Canada is becoming more acute.

The cost of transportation has increased from 800 per cent to 1000 per cent beyond what it was when war broke out.

Merchant shipping is the life for all else in Canada. It is one of the greatest problems that the country has to grapple with and it should be grappled with at the earliest possible moment. The Government must make up its mind to do the bigger and prompter thing, instead of the feeble and slower, unless our general imports and exports are to be restricted and our whole economic life impeded.

Our Trade Expansion Requires Outlet.

It is a vital matter on the Pacific seaboard, where the shortage of tonnage was felt before the war. It will be impossible to develop the lumber industry of British Columbia and the coal mining industry of that great Province without Canadian controlled transportation facilities. Nearly all the ships en-

gaged in the lumber carrying trade are under charter controlled by San Francisco interests with a result that our mills stand idle on account of the difficulty of getting tonnage for export trade. It is vital to every trade and industry developed by war necessity, vital to our steel industry, which has grown by such rapid and remarkable strides until tremendous numbers of artisans are now engaged in its development.

True, the considerations that have to be taken into account are vast, intricate, and complicated, but a country that has a great iron and steel industry, as Canada has now, could undoubtedly engage in the construction of steel ships. When Germany is utterly crushed, the world's engineering trade will be in the hands of Great Britain, America, and ourselves, so that the policy of the Government should be made known quickly that the people would be in a position to take advantage of it.

It would, of course, be impossible to name any period within which the shipbuilding industry could be made self-sustaining, so that afterwards the business of building ships in Canada could be carried on without any tonnage subsidy, although the cost of building ships in Great Britain, and the cost of building them in Canada would yearly tend to approximate.

Great Britain has an enormous advantage over the world in ship-building. The labor markets give her an advantage. In normal times labor is cheaper, capital is cheaper, and by reason of doing an enormous business in shipbuilding for the world, she is able to observe economies that would not be possible in a new country embarking upon the shipbuilding industry.

Subsidized Shipping.

That encouragement must be given is obvious. All vessels which intend to compete with the ships built under the conditions of the yards of England, and competing with the whole world for business, should be free from all charges which make ships expensive in Canada, and a construction subsidy granted. Japan, America, and Germany are subsidizing and protecting their shipping. In Canada it must be such as would encourage the establishment of the ship-building industry on a large and permanent scale and must ensure the ships so built at least in the early stages being available for the purposes of Canadian trade.

Those could be built under a Government commission which would decide the design and tonnage required. To succeed some department of the Government preferably that of Trade and Commerce must take the initiative.

It should surely be possible out of the coming commercial convention to have a large board of consultants constituted to help, when required, a small central committee of which the heads of other departments would form the nucleus, strengthened by work-a-day engineers, men who really have to tackle the design, handling and control of engineering and ship building plants, both commercial and experimental.

There would at once be constituted an invaluable body of expert opinion before which every department, every subsidiary branch of the industry, could lay the burden of its enquiry.

This organization could undertake the function of initiating proposals for the consideration of the Minister of Trade and Commerce and a regular procedure of inviting and collecting proposals could be established. Such a body would be capable of rendering vast service to every Government department and every Canadian industry.

Only those familiar with German methods fully realise the immense debt that Germany is under to her manufacturers and scientists, liberally supported by the Government for their painstaking work which rendered possible Germany's trade supremacy.

Large sums of money will be required for the development of this work. It will be well spent, giving immediate and far reaching results.

Women on the Land

An Agricultural Problem Now Before the British Authorities

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Many attempts are being made to induce the women of the United Kingdom to take up work on the land permanently. Some of the organizations directed to this end are very powerful, and they are all moved by a fine impulse. The problem they have to solve is complex, as all agricultural and horticultural problems are.

Before the war there were several places in the country for the training of educated women to such work. These women paid college fees, and most of them qualified for positions as horticulturists for a definite wage. Others put capital of their own into one or other of the many branches of land industry.

To-day, mainly through the war spirit which animates us all to our highest endeavor, educated women have gone on the land in large numbers without training to work for a weekly wage. They have thus definitely joined the industrial classes. There have always been in this country women of the industrial classes on the land, especially at harvest time. This year there are probably more of such women. So far as they are concerned the permanence of their attachment to the land after the war is wholly one of wages. I do not propose therefore to deal with this side of the matter in these notes.

Educated Women on the Land.

The position of educated women is entirely different. Many hundreds of them have gone to the land in order to help their country during the war. I have just returned from a visit of some days to the principal market-gardening area in England. About four hundred educated women, gathered from all parts of the country, are working there in place of men. Every one of their employers is more than satisfied with the way in which they have taken to the work. Their educated intelligence enables them very quickly to pick up the various processes of cultivation and harvesting. They are nearly all keen workers. This year we are having dull, cold

and rainy weather; yet they bear the out-of-door life without a murmur, and some of their employers say they work in weather which in the old days drove men to shelter.

What are the Prospects?

So far the record is satisfactory. What of the prospects? How many of these educated women will become permanent laborers on the land? What is being done to induce them to stay? Will the return of peace so diminish their fervor that they will hand their work over again to the men? I should add here that so far as the employers are concerned in this particular district they hope that a large number of women will remain with them, and they say they can always find work for them, no matter how many men return from the war. It is a district capable of absorbing very much more labor than it has ever had.

The question of wages is bound up with the purchasing power of the earnings. At present these educated girls from the towns, singing as they go about their work, are lodging in private houses and paying about 14s. (\$3.30) a week. For this they are now receiving board and lodging and getting their washing done. They earn on the average about £1 sterling a week. The margin left them is roughly \$1.50 a week. Obviously it is not enough. The lodging-keepers are protesting that they must receive more. An increase of wages would probably leave a margin no wider than at present. Moreover, except in places where they could be employed in-doors or under glass during the winter the employers cannot undertake to pay their wages regularly in the cold months of the year.

It is plain enough that under such conditions educated women will not remain for the rest of their lives on the land. When the war is over the ranks

(Continued on page 17).