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Business Conditions and Duty of Business Men

Necessity for Business and Patriotic Motives to Keep Wheels of Commerce Turning—Some Elements Are Not Doing Their Duty—Need of Creation of an Enlightened Public Spirit and Community Interest.

The present condition of business in British Columbia, and the same is true of business in the other Provinces of Western Canada, is usually ascribed to the War. The fact is lost sight of, perhaps, that, war or no war, business would not have been very active the past fall or the ensuing winter and spring. There can, however, be little doubt that the war has intensified or aggravated present conditions. While the present poor business is due in part to the unsound economic condition in which we find ourselves through the excessive importation of food-stuffs, in part to the excesses of speculation, and lastly in part to the war itself, it must be admitted, so far as the editor is able to make observations, that no small element in the situation is due to reasons within the individual composing the business community throughout the Province—in reality, an attitude of mind.

This attitude assumes two phases. One phase is that of present conditions operating on the mind of the business man in such a way that it stultifies his activities. "There is not business to be had," he argues, "so what is the use of trying to do any?" Business men are daily fighting the battle on the Yser, on the Aisne and on the Vistula with greater gusto than those taking part on the battle-fields themselves, and waiting patiently for the signing of peace treaties. In the meanwhile there is no business to be done, and it isn't worth trying. This is not only bad for the individual, for the business he is in, but it is also bad patriotism. There are stern times which call for the best in men—of their thought and activity.

The other phase lies without the man, but may to a degree be changed by enquiry and the gathering of information. We refer to a market that is lost in a measure for the present, but the existence of other markets which may be entered if only the information and methods of getting at them were available. New business connections are more difficult to establish, but when once established a very profitable trade may be worked up, which might lead to greater

growth than if only the usual connections of the local or known market were availed of.

Whether the business man is confronted with conditions in his particular line which have the effect of making him inert, either due to the fact that he has put by enough to await the dawn of a better day or is due to the fact that he is practically paralyzed and mastered by such conditions; or whether the business man is confronted by conditions wherein he is striving with might and main to maintain

activity, but is deprived of markets which he usually depended on to trade in and does not know where to look for others, it is the supreme duty of both to try to do as much business as possible. Keeping the wheels of commerce and industry turning, by each one adding the weight of his efforts, is an act at once of good business and high patriotism.

With half the inertia swept away that is affecting the business men of this Province, and if a firm attack on the hampered conditions is brought to bear on the task of keeping things going by the application of industry, commonsense and economy, a great forward step would be taken in the march toward commercial and industrial recovery.

New lines of attack must be made, greater competition must be expected, and smaller profits must be the result. It must be borne in mind that if in the usual course of events only a bare living is earned, the man who thus makes it is entitled to consider himself a success.

These are lines of activity for the individual, the firm, the corporation, to adopt wherever they have not hitherto been

applied. In the larger field of public policy, and combination for mutual protection and assistance through public organization, there is endless scope. For the rectifying of our import food balance by the stimulation of an agricultural immigration and an agricultural development, we have the powerful assistance of the railways, who will enter in the ensuing spring on a campaign for the settlement of lands tributary to their various lines. We are of the opinion that the Government will seek in a more definite way to assist this movement at the coming session of the Legislature. Time is the essential element in this. The movement, however, when gotten under way, will be

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