

## Business in British Columbia

Serious shortage in the Salmon pack -- Busy times in shipyards and Lumber mills

(Special to the Journal of Commerce.)

Partly as a result of the increasing demand for war supplies, and partly because of the natural growth and development of British Columbia, manufacturing plants in the province have increased by about 33 per cent. during the past two years. There are now about 600, compared with 450 on the first anniversary of the war, according to figures supplied by Mr. Hart, secretary of the Manufacturers' Association.

During the first year or so of the war the value of war orders received in British Columbia would not exceed two million dollars. Since then, however, there has been a substantial increase, although no definite figures are yet available.

Not only has there been an increase in the number of manufacturing plants, Mr. Hart points out, but many of those already in existence have greatly increased their output.

### A DOZEN SHIPYARDS.

The largest increase in any one industry, as far as value is concerned, is in shipbuilding. There are about a dozen new shipyards, although they are coming into being so rapidly that a counting up does not remain accurate for long.

Latest estimates place the present value of the shipbuilding industry in British Columbia at about \$27,000,000, practically all of which has grown up during the past year.

Next to shipbuilding, probably the largest increase has been in lumber and shingle mills. These have increased to a considerable extent all over British Columbia.

### MANY NEW SHINGLE MILLS.

The increase in the number of shingle mills is estimated by the Shingle Association of British Columbia to be about 40 per cent. There are now some 60 mills equipped with about 400 machines. At the present time 85 per cent. are in operation; the remainder being closed owing to a strike.

There has, however, been a steady growth in the output of shingles, despite some serious difficulties. A large part of the market is in the United States, and for a considerable period last winter shipments across the line were seriously hindered by the car shortage.

Last year's output of shingles was about two billion, and an increase of quite a few million is looked for during 1917.

### LUMBERING IS ACTIVE.

The development of the wooden shipbuilding industry has given a considerable impetus to the lumber industry, and new mills are springing up all the time.

As an instance of the increase in the number of lumber mills, there may be taken a stretch of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway between Prince George and Crofton, a station not far east of McBride. Up to about a year ago there were no industries or signs of any activity other than homesteading; now there are a dozen lumber mills.

There have been considerable lumbering activities in connection with the development of the pulp and paper industries.

### FOR FOREIGN TRADE.

Among the largest of the new mills is that of the Robert Dollar Steamship Co. They are operating a mill at Roche Point, near Vancouver, and have acquired a hundred million feet of lumber to feed it.

This is particularly to supply the export trade to Hongkong, Shanghai, Manila, and Japan. There is a strong demand for Douglas fir in the Orient.

The increase that has been taking place in this industry shows every indication of being maintained. General construction is much more in evidence than at any time since the beginning of the war, and from all the regular markets and some new ones the demand for British Columbia lumber and its products is growing.

### A 700 PER CENT. INCREASE.

There has been a 700 per cent. increase in the number of plants putting up evaporated fruits and vegetables, says Mr. Hart. Also there have been about two dozen fruit canneries started within the last couple of years. They preserve fruit and make jams and marmalades.

The supply of imported jams and marmalades has been almost completely cut off owing to the war, and British Columbia products are filling the demand fairly well.

Toy-making has made considerable strides, and four new plants have been started—one in Victoria and three in Vancouver. Formerly there was only one.

Three new steel plants are in operation, one at Port Moody, one at Eburne, and one at Lulu Island. Up to quite recently there were none at all in the province.

Many of the existing factories have been enlarged considerably, particularly in the case of engineering works. The Vancouver Engineering Works, for instance, has added to its premises to a tremendous extent, putting in a new Bessemer furnace, in addition to other changes.

The Vulcan Iron Works is now the biggest plant of its kind on the Pacific Coast. It has moved from its old premises in New Westminster to a new site on the Industrial Island in Vancouver, where the new building is costing \$150,000. Boiler making is the specialty of this plant.

### ENGINEERING SHOPS GROW.

No less than sixteen engineering shops in British Columbia have increased their equipment as a result of war orders. They are all fully modern shops now.

There are two new galvanizing plants, one in Vancouver and one on Lulu Island. Also two new soap works were started in Vancouver. Both are comparatively small.

Three new box factories were started in Vancouver during the past couple of years. One of them is a cigar box plant.

### BUILDING AEROPLANES.

The North Shore Iron Works is another firm to increase its capacity, the plant having been doubled. There were two electrical manufacturing plants started in Vancouver.

Also in Vancouver are two aeroplane factories. The Hoffar firm has already made one machine, and the Hamilton Company has manufactured three. The capital of the former is now being increased from about \$20,000 to \$100,000.

Among the recent new lumber firms is one which will specialize on the production of spruce for aeroplane manufacturing.

A new development in British Columbia industries is the establishment of a sea products company in New Westminster. They will devote their energies to the canning of clams and other shell fish, and are the first to engage in this enterprise on the west coast of Canada.

### WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTION.

British Columbia's production of manufactured articles covers a wide range. The industries include the making of aeroplanes, of automobile accessories and tops, asbestos articles of many kinds, artificial stone and flooring, boots and shoes, book bindings, boot polish, brooms and brushes, brick tile and clay products.

The factories of the province make boxes, butchers' supplies, cans, cartons, paper boxes, cement, canvas tents and awnings, overalls, gloves, carriages, chemicals, clothing and vats.

### MANY IMPORTANT PLANTS.

There are creosoting works, plants for the manufacture of dies and rubber stamps, drugs, engravings, explosives, elevators, furniture, glass and leaded windows, harness, saddlery and leather, inks, jewellery, knitted goods, leather belting and matches.

Neckwear is made here, as are paints, varnishes, potash and kelp, pulp and paper, printers' ink, refrigerators, roofing, scales, ships, soap, toys, novelties, trunks, tobaccos and cigars, vacuum cleaners, veneer and laminated woods, food products, beverages such as aerated waters, beers, ciders, whiskies, biscuits, butter, cereals, cheese, condensed milk, confectionery, desiccated vegetables, canned fruit, flour, spices, baking powder, coffee, tea, extracts, jams, pickles, sauces, sugar, syrup, canned meats and packed meats.

Among the most important plants are those for metal manufacturing, such as boiler shops, engineering works and machine shops, foundries, nail works, wire and fences, sheet metal works and steel rolling mills. There are oil refineries, too, and these in common with many other plants, have largely increased their capacity within the past two years.

With only about 80,000 cases of Fraser River salmon packed up to the present time, it is now evident that the "big run" is a failure, and will only amount to fifteen per cent. or so of the 1913 pack. The entire pack could have been put up in one large cannery, and it is likely that some of the plants will close down this week.

Cannerymen have abandoned all hope of a successful season, and are now discussing the best means of rehabilitating the Fraser River salmon fishing. There is talk of asking the Government to close the river for a period, but this would undoubtedly meet with a great deal of opposition.

It is pointed out that United States fishermen have the first opportunity, and that when the salmon get to the Fraser they are greatly depleted in number. As the American pack is only likely to amount to a quarter of the 1913 pack, and the Fraser River pack will be about fifteen per cent., it is thought that this would be a good time for concerted action.

"Cannerymen on both sides of the line are getting scared," was how one authority put it, "and it should be easy to agree on some measures to improve the fishing."

"At the present time all the canneries on the Fraser are open, but they are not getting anything," said Mr. F. E. Burke, general manager of the Wallace Fisheries. Everybody has lost this year, and the pack will not be more than fifteen per cent. of the last "big run" in 1913.

"The Fraser River as a rule operates for three years for the fishermen and one year for the canners. Now the run has failed, and they are up against it."

"Probably some of the canneries will close down this week. One of them, I hear, is in financial difficulties."

Mr. Burke estimated that there would be a loss of six million dollars to the province of British Columbia as a result of the failure of the "big run" this year.

"I think the Fraser River should be closed," he said, when asked for his opinion as to the best means of improving the salmon fishing. "There is a lot of difference of opinion on that question, however, but some drastic steps should certainly be taken."

Mr. Burke estimated that the Fraser River salmon pack so far was about 80,000 cases, including trapped fish on the west coast of Vancouver Island, which are all Fraser River salmon. The 1913 pack, he said, was 702,000 cases.

There would not be many more salmon caught, and the present year's run would certainly not be more than fifteen per cent. of that of four years ago.

Mr. Barker, manager of the B. C. Packers' Association, was of the opinion that most of the canneries ought never to have been opened. "The whole pack could have been put up in one cannery," he said.

There are 37 canneries on the Fraser River, and the B. C. Packers operate ten of them. It was not the intention of the association to close any of their plants before the official end of the season on Aug. 25, he said. In fact, the season had been so bad that it might be extended to allow the canneries to take advantage of any more fish that might come in.

While the B. C. Packers are keeping all their canneries open, this is being done largely to help the employees, and all the other plants will certainly not take advantage of an extended season, should there be one.

As to the advisability of closing the Fraser, Mr. Barker thought there was no doubt of the river being closed if the salmon catch did not improve. It would close naturally if the pack was no better than the present one.

Mr. W. B. Burdis, manager of the B. C. Salmon Canners' Association, was prepared to admit that the closing of the river would improve conditions. There was no doubt that it had been over fished.

At the same time, he did not think it would be easy to arrive at a solution of the problem. Closing the river, he said, might be an advantage to those canneries which had plants in other places; but to the cannery whose only plant was on the Fraser it would mean ruin.

That, of course, would be the fate of most of the canneries if the pack was to go on decreasing, but then people preferred to hope. He did not think Government action in closing the river would be welcomed.

A number of the canneries did not pack on Monday, Mr. Burdis said. Already one of the largest canneries at Bellingham has closed, and some of the Fraser River plants are likely to follow suit before long.

The huge falling off in the salmon catch is shown from the figures of the past year. The 1913 pack on the Fraser, the year of the last "big run," was 702,000 cases. In 1916, it was about 100,000 cases. Up to the present time the 1917 catch is estimated at 80,000 cases, and it is most unlikely that there will be another 20,000 cases put up. Even if there were this many the "big run" would only be about fifteen per cent. of the last one.

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