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Side-lights on Provincial Trade and Enterprise

While Business is Sound, It is Not as Active as the Circumstances Warrant—Cases of Mining and Lumber Industries—Lack of Initiative and Enterprise.

The trouble with business in British Columbia is not its quality, but its quantity, or perhaps stating it differently, is that business is not as active as it should be considering the circumstances and the tremendous opportunities. The testimony is well nigh unanimous that never were commercial credits better than at the present time; notes and drafts are promptly met and collections are excellent. The class of business is also of a high order. Business placed is for legitimate requirements of consumptive demands. Speculation is at low ebb. Difficulty is experienced in the getting of goods, and supplies are small and generally below what would naturally be required by the average merchant and jobber. Nor is the volume of business under general conditions small. Since the break from the boom period and the prostration consequent on the outbreak of war business is today at a higher level than for the three previous springs. Then, if this state of affairs is intrinsically true, what is wrong with business?

Business is wrong because it is not doing its full duty to itself or the country in this hour of trial; nor is it living up to its opportunities, nor is it assuming those responsibilities which the available opportunities involve.

There is a case in point which should cause the grave concern of the entire people, and that is the coal strike in the Interior. About two or three weeks ago the Consolidated smelter at Trail had to discharge several hundred men on account of the necessity to close down some furnaces because there was no coke to run them. As a consequence, Rossland mines had to discharge several hundred more men because the Smelter could not take the ore, and there was no use mining unless the ores could be treated. As a result mining in the interior is being very considerably interfered with and possibly stopped unless the smelters operating there can be kept supplied with coke. Now the products of the smelters are copper, lead, zinc, all necessary in the making of munitions and all needed in greater supply than is at present available. This is war work of an important and vital character. Yet the troubles in the Crow's Nest

Pass and elsewhere between miners and operators are permitted to threaten war work of an essential character, namely the production of necessary metals. One would think that in the opinion of miners and operators that no war existed. The people of British Columbia should no longer tolerate the tying up of important industry. Due to the temper of the nation and the machinery available, the difficulties could be promptly surmounted by the Government taking over the mines and operating them, allowing

a fair wage to the miner and a reasonable profit to the operator with resort to force if needed. The present situation requires stern and strong action and not temporizing as was done under the previous condition of peace. Business in this is not living up to its responsibility, especially in view of extraordinary profit and war needs.

But the shortage of coke for metallurgical purposes has been an ever present evil since the revival of the mining industry. If the coke conditions in 1916 had been satisfactory the Province would have had a mineral production for that year of fifty million dollars instead of the forty-three million as estimated by the Provincial mineralogist. The problem of coke shortage occupies a very important place in the whole mining industry and it is necessary for the mining and business interests of the Province to solve this problem and solve it as soon as possible. It is the duty of the mine operators and miners to produce coal and that which is suitable should be converted into coke so that the production of vital metals in the waging of war

should not be wanting insofar as it is humanly possible to avoid.

It is in the larger phases of business, but which are capable of individual application that the business interests of British Columbia, as perhaps they have elsewhere, have failed and are failing in initiative and enterprise. They are lacking in foresight and imagination.

The pulp and paper industry is a glowing example to the contrary. The Powell River Company is turning out a maximum output and striving to increase that production. The Pacific Mills is literally spending millions of dollars and hastening the time that the wheels shall turn and manufacture. The B. C. Sulphite plant is steadily increasing its output of sulphite fibre and the Empire Pulp

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