

# THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COMMERCIAL JOURNAL

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## B. C. BOARD OF TRADE.

The annual meeting of the British Columbia Board of Trade, held on Friday, was, in many respects, an important event. The report presented to the members amply demonstrated that the institution was not a mere body of men who had assumed a corporate name, but a body which had banded itself together for the sake of, in its corporate capacity, doing the province and the city some substantial service. For some time it has had the honor of having as its President, Mr. Robert Ward, one of the leading business men of Victoria, who has not been content to merely attend to matters with which he and his firm have been charged, but has been accustomed to look ahead and do all that he could to promote the public advancement. With the assistance of Mr. Thomas B. Hall, the enterprising vice-president, and other members of the Board, Mr. Ward has during his term of office done considerable towards promoting the objects that the Board have in view, and what has been accomplished attests that their labors have not been in vain.

The Board in its report has very properly referred, among other matters, to the China and Japan mail steamship service, in connection with which it is pointed out that, outside of the amount granted by the Dominion annually, by way of subsidy, Victoria has paid during the last eighteen months \$81,650 as freight to vessels running in connection with the C. P. R., and, therefore, her claims call for more than ordinary comment, which, it may here be remarked, it would appear to be the settled policy of that company to ignore, despite the pledges given by it and the engagements undertaken by President Van Horne individually. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to lay too much stress upon this subject, and, it may be added, that at the present time by liberally encouraging the rival company, the Upton line, Victoria may secure all the Asiatic service which she desires, as it is beyond question the new company has had the most satisfactory encouragement. This paper has since its establishment given no uncertain sound on this question, as it regards as absolutely essential much better facilities in connection with both the existing Oriental and the contemplated Australian service. It is idle now to pretend, as the company have been accustomed to do, that the dockage facilities

at the Outer Wharf are inadequate. They have been conclusively proved to be ample, and if the company continue to pursue their present policy, Victoria merchants cannot do other than place the C. P. Railway and Steamship Company on the black list.

Very naturally, the Board makes a cogent reference to the necessity of improved harbor facilities. Enlarged harbor accommodations must be had, and those not mere individual and isolated works, but as portions, as the report puts it, of "a well-defined scheme." The Island of Vancouver, as every one knows, is very badly off in connection with its telegraphic service, which may be said to be almost the worst that can be imagined. It is at the mercy of one company, which, besides the carelessness almost incidental to the control it enjoys, does just about as little as it can to meet the public requirements—whether that be in connection with the press service or the wants of ordinary business. The hope is expressed by the Council of the Board of Trade, in their report, that the recent visit of an officer of the Marine and Fisheries Department may have as its effect the doing of something to improve the lights, beacons and buoy service on the coast of British Columbia and the Fraser River. The following extract from the Board's annual statement cannot fail to be emphasized by all who are in any way interested directly or indirectly in the sealing industry:

"It is earnestly to be hoped that the Imperial Government, when considering the whole question, will not only speedily arrange that the sealing industry can, in future, be proceeded with untrammelled, but will also make ample provision to recompense our people, who, in the past, have had their property seized and sold, and, who, in the present, are deprived from following that which has been recognized by our Government as a lawful pursuit."

To this we fervently say "Amen;" as also to the conclusion at which the committee has come "that the time has now arrived when the railway system of Vancouver Island should be extended northward, and trusts that the Provincial Government at the next session of the Legislature will take the necessary steps towards carrying out this important work, and thus open up a large and undeveloped section of this island." We are not, however, like some communities, which are so wrapped up in their own selfishness and self importance that they cannot look outside of themselves; but we are anxious to witness more substantial mainland development, which, to our mind, is absolutely essential.

There has been so much that is peculiar in the policy of the Government with respect to the salmon industry that it is to be hoped that there are really substantial grounds for the impression which prevails that the Ottawa authorities are really about to appoint a commission at an early date to thoroughly enquire into the working of the industry and the existing regulations regarding it. In their reference to the various trade and other interests of the Province, the committee of the Board speak with very great hopefulness, and very justifiably point with pride to the insignificant number of failures that have occurred during the year, which, in connection with other facts, causes British

Columbia to take high rank in trade matters with the sister provinces. The following, while a most encouraging statement, may also be considered as a timely note of warning: "It is to be hoped that this enviable position will be maintained by her merchants, manufacturers and traders, to the exclusion of over-speculative operations in real estate, and ventures other than those of legitimate trade and commerce."

## THE ESQUIMALT DOCK.

H. M. S. Warspite will, in all probability have taken possession of the Esquimalt graving dock before this paper reaches its readers. This will practically prevent all other vessels, no matter their extremity, obtaining the benefit of the facilities which are there afforded. Already two vessels, which had applied for accommodation, have had to go away without obtaining it, and the same has been the case with other craft at previous times. The great need of the dock has been abundantly manifested, and probably without it H. M. S. Amphion and other valuable vessels might not now have been in commission but would have been abandoned wrecks. Against the construction of the dock grave and repeated objections were raised, and, since it has been in operation, there have been those who have pretended that it was not a paying concern, and that its construction and maintenance have been acts of folly.

But it is not everything of public benefit that pays its own way. The general benefits conferred, however, more than make up for the balance on the wrong side of the account. Who will say that the feeling of safety which the presence and operation of the dock confer upon vessel owners and mariners does not more than make up for any adverse balance there might exist? This, we contend, has not been demonstrated. How many public works are there that are maintained at a loss which do not return a tithe of the benefits that are secured at Esquimalt? Moreover, it is the general conviction, as judged from experience, that the accommodations provided are utterly inadequate to existing requirements; much less are they likely to be equal to the demands that are sure to arise with augmented commercial and shipping developments.

What is wanted is an enlargement of the present dock or the construction of another one alongside of it. In this way, the apparatus at present on the ground, which is necessarily not always employed, could be more largely and at the same time more economically made available. Vancouver has been sturdily begging for a dock; but its site, approached by so many tortuous channels from the ocean is not nearly as eligible as that of Esquimalt, which may be said to be almost on the direct path of disabled vessels, that while they might reach Esquimalt in safety, would have their risks tenfold increased by the dangers of the passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland. It is not in this case a matter of pleasing Vancouver or Victoria but it is a question of public policy, and, looking at the subject from that point of view, we cannot see how there should be two opinions on the matter.