

Eastern Canadian Markets for British Columbia Lumber

SPECIAL REPORT BY MR. BEALE, PROVINCIAL LUMBER COMMISSIONER

Increased Quantity of B. C. Lumber Shipped.

Investigations as to the amount of B.C. lumber being shipped into Eastern Canada this year suggests that the total for the twelve ending December 21st, 1918, will be about 150 million feet. Prior to, and in, 1914, I believe the annual shipment was approximately 25 to 30 million feet.

Reason for Increase

which has been gradual for the past four years is due to several causes, among them the following:

The lumber production of all grades of Eastern Canadian saw timber in recent years has been below normal. It is expected that this year's cut will amount to only 50 or 60 per cent of normal.

In Eastern Canada labor is scarce and high in price—lumber prices have advanced to their present price of \$33 and up for common dimension and \$35 and up for common boards F.O.B. Cars Toronto, with a limited supply and strong demand. Generally speaking, the grades of Eastern lumber are lower than before the war notably so in white pine.

The demand in U.S.A. for certain grades of Eastern lumber has been good.

Imports of Southern Yellow Pine have decreased owing to good demand in the States and difficult of transportation.

Demand in Eastern Canada for timbers and lumber generally for emergency construction has been good.

Our market extension work in 1915-17 educated Eastern Canada to the value and qualities of our woods. This work is especially reflected in Architects' and engineers' specifications.

Prices of B. C. Lumber

Prices for B.C. lumber here have steadily risen for the past three years. There have been some fluctuations up and down, but only for short periods.

At the moment, prices for B.C. lumber are a shade off, but the volume of inquiries for our material may reinstate prices—at any rate, for a time.

Present business on the whole is for emergency purposes, and how long this will keep up is difficult to determine.

Immediate Business

In interviews with lumber dealers, architects, engineers and manufacturers, the impression of uncertainty was gained as to building and construction prospects in the immediate future. Lumber dealers are buying for immediate requirements only.

Architects and engineers have quantities of plans and specifications prepared and ready to go ahead.

Manufacturers are enlarging plants to take care of business as it comes along.

House-building of the smaller kind encouraged by the existing high rentals is in evidence on a limited scale.

The housing problem is being given much prominence by the real estate agents and landowners who are looking for purchasers of lots—the supply of houses is just sufficient to make rents high and accommodate the population.

But these are for emergency and present factors only.

After the War Prospects

Development work commenced before the war and stopped at various stages since, is in line for completion now and will require a great deal of lumber. Included in this is harbor work, railroad work, car building, hydro electric development, telephone poles, cross arms, etc. wood using industries turning out agricultural implements, ladders, churns, washing machines, ships and so on use enormous quantities of wood, and such industries must look to new sources of lumber supplies, if their business expands.

To obtain a generous share of all the business, B.C. should carry on educational work, and her mills must be wil-

ling to manufacture for the market. It must be remembered that Eastern Canada is an attractive market for other outside timber producing regions, such as the Southern Pine Country, the Inland Empire and, recently, our own mountain mills.

Boston Market

In some lines of the lumber business the Boston market is on a par with Eastern Canada, but owing to the very long haul, I do not look for the Boston market to take much of the far Western lumber outside of the best in clear and uppers and the very best shingles.

Market Possibilities

I see no reason to alter my views reported two years ago that the Eastern Canadian market can normally take 250,000,000 feet, annually of B. C. lumber. To attain this quantity may require water transportation or distributing stocks laid down in strategic points by rail (or both) but with proper handling, B. C. can, in this market. It will probably be necessary, however, to saw and dress some lines rather thicker than at present, especially in our mountain stocks of soft and white pine and interior spruce, as these species would come into direct competition with the native woods, though it is probably easier for us to supply better uppers in quantity than Eastern Canada can produce.

I believe our mountain mills would be justified in looking to this market for a good share of business. Stock must be carefully manufactured and delivered with reasonable despatch. Eastern lumbermen are not expecting to increase production materially for a year or two and Eastern lumber will not get better in grade.

One or more selling agencies representing a number of mountain mills might be a satisfactory method of handling their stock.

Common Grades

As an indication of the present market conditions, I would mention that B.C. has recently shipped to Ottawa, in the heart of the Eastern lumber business, large quantities of No. 1 common dimension and boards at, I understand, satisfactory prices to our mills. This is an isolated case and perhaps not often repeatable, but it does bear out reports of small production here.

There will be here, as in all markets, fluctuation in demand and prices, but, taking an average of years, it is fairly obvious that Eastern Canada must look outside her own borders for large quantities of lumber.

Export From Eastern Canada

Eastern Canada can, for a few years at least, export foreign approximately 100 million feet of lumber, and the demand

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Uncertainty as to the market when the armistice was declared led many stock men to throw his stock on the market unfinished in the effort to turn his animals into money before prices went down. It was poor policy as events have shown. There has been no decline in the price except when quality and finish were inferior. The export demand remains steady.

DENMARK'S BACON TRADE

Before the war Denmark used to send Great Britain 2,300,000 hundred weight of bacon per year. Today Denmark is herself short of 1,373,000 pigs, and her great hungry neighbour, Germany, is short 19,306,000 pigs. Britain will have to look elsewhere for the bacon Denmark used to supply, and here is where Canada will find a permanent trade opportunity with the mother country of no mean proportions.