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Preferential Trade With Australia on Lumber

Preferential Trade with Australia on Lumber—Market for Lumber in Australia, of Which British Columbia Last Year Got Only 4%, Would Be Stimulated by Preferential Trade Agreement.

E. W. Hamber.

Never has there been a time when the different Dominions of our Empire have felt the need of unity, and a permanent policy of assisting each other, more than the present. To establish a united Empire within which to build up the self-supporting trade within the Empire, the import requirements of one portion to be filled by the export offerings of another portion, to their mutual benefit and to the enrichment of the whole, should be the earnest endeavour of our scattered Dominions.

The idea is not one of party politics, but belongs to much broader lines—a world-wide Imperial preference cementing more surely than anything a united Empire.

I propose only to endeavour to show, in as concise a manner as possible, the benefits that would accrue to British Columbia in particular, and to Canadian trade generally, through a preference with Australia in respect to their importations of lumber, and only hope that it will lead others to think and lend their assistance to the furtherance of this important matter. The welfare of this particular industry is, as we all must admit, of great importance to British Columbia. To obtain larger revenues for our Province, to keep the lumber mills busy operating full time, to increase the payrolls, and, by large export trade, to bring vessels to our ports—our merchants thereby securing the trade that each vessel would occasion in the nature of supplies, and many other items,—is a matter which should have our immediate and earnest consideration; and as our Provincial Government may be almost called joint owners in the standing timber of the Province, it is materially in their interests to lend their co-operation.

It is continually remarked and advocated on all sides, for lumbermen to extend and seek markets in order to secure larger field for the output of their lumber. In dealing with the Australian market, few people seem to realize that it is quite unnecessary to find this market, as the mar-

ket is there, for all and more than the mills of British Columbia are able to supply.

A few facts will demonstrate what the fostering of this particular branch of trade with Australia, and the obtaining from them of a preference, would mean to our Province. Australia imported from the Pacific Coast, including the mills on the American side of the line, the large sum of 238,773,612 feet of Douglas fir; of this amount, the mills in Washington and Oregon supplied 228,673,576 feet—the mills of British Columbia, the ridiculously small proportion of 10,000,036 feet. From the year 1902 to the year 1913, the importations by Australia of Douglas fir increased over 390%. In the year 1902 British Columbia enjoyed 33% of the trade, and in the year 1913 she enjoyed only 4%. In the year 1913 the Coast mills in our Province cut 780,000,000 feet—of that amount only 46,000,000 feet were exported to all the foreign countries combined. A glance will suffice to prove what an absurdly small proportion of the available Australian trade the British Columbia Coast mills participated in.

Is there any reason why two sister Dominions, under the same flag, should not mutually benefit by a preferential arrangement at the expense of outside nations, and without any increased cost to the consumers? It is not a question of, nor a request for free trade, but for a preference only, without any diminution of revenue to the Australian Customs, or any added expense to the Australian consumer. Canada has a preferential tariff with South Africa, namely, the

preference of a rebate of 10% on the duty, amounting to approximately 2½% on the value of the lumber. British Columbia enjoys 64% of the total lumber trade with South Africa. Think for one moment what it would mean to the peoples of British Columbia if we enjoyed that percentage of the Australian trade.

Of late there have been many suggestions advanced advocating the extension of trade in lumber with Great Britain and European markets, and it is only right that our exports of lumber should be extended in all directions; but why not first make a strenuous endeavour to expand in what might be classified as our own natural markets? The natural markets of the Pacific Coast lie not in Europe, but

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