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The Provincial Government introduced its Shipping Bill into the Legislature on Wednesday last. Due to the fact that the text of the bill is not at hand, we will have to delay review and comment on this important piece of legislation to a subsequent issue.

In our issue of January 15, we outlined what in our opinion was necessary for the establishment of a shipbuilding and shipping industry in this Province. This consisted, first, in giving a bonus of, say, ten dollars per gross ton displacement for ships built in the Province; and, second, for a bonus of tonnage carried from British Columbia ports of British Columbia products. We believe the first would go a long way to establish shipbuilding, and the second would offer great inducements to take our lumber and other products to the markets of the world. This plan would have the advantage of leaving to individual or corporate initiative and enterprise the development of both a shipbuilding and a shipping industry.

The Government, however, deem it necessary to go further. Press despatches say that the Government bill provides for Provincial loans to owners amounting to 55% of the cost of the ship; to subsidize owners at the rate of five dollars per ton dead weight capacity, to go into effect one year after declaration of peace; and to guarantee the cost of construction of shipyards to 55% of the outlay. The Government protects itself by taking security of a prior lien on all undertakings where Provincial credit or funds are used.

We are not prepared to say whether these proposals are entirely justified. However, the need is great. The importance to British Columbia industry of an adequate merchant marine is vital, and not until such a merchant marine is established on a sound and profitable basis will British Columbia come into its own.

The proposed Workmen's Compensation Act has been introduced finally into the Provincial Legislature as a Government measure. When this Act becomes law, as it will likely at this session, we will review this legislation and point out its salient features.

The Act provides for compulsory insurance in the State fund, to the exclusion of those insurance companies that have been doing business of this class for the past fifty years. The measure will very likely be passed unanimously. The two Socialist members will support it, one of whom has already been heard in its praise. This is very natural, since any encroachment of the State on private enterprise is in full consonance with their programme of State ownership of industry, and any measure which approximates or tends toward this end receives their hearty support.

The Liberal members in opposition will vote for the measure because of its popularity with labor. It appears no party in any country, where democratic principles prevail, dare oppose any programme which is in favor with the labor interests.

Under our system of private ownership, the bill is completely out of time. This despite the popularity of this

The services of this journal are offered through an inquiry column, which is open to subscribers and the public generally without charge, for detailed information or opinion as to financial or industrial affairs or institutions throughout the Province of British Columbia. Wherever possible the replies to these inquiries will be made through this column. Where inquiries are not of general interest, they will be handled by letter. We think that we can assure our readers that the opinions expressed will be sane and conservative, and that all statements will be as accurate as possible.

class of legislation which has swept the Continent. The competitive principle is still the rule of trade, and that which vitiates this principle subjects trade and industry to inefficiency and all the grave abuses that hinge upon monopoly. We can conceive of no reason why a State should be afraid to enter into competition with private enterprise. Its great wealth and power give it a commanding position and it is established everywhere within its own jurisdiction, necessitating low costs of doing business. With great advantages in its favor, it should be willing to encounter competition of every kind.

It is undoubtedly true that present legislation on this subject is inadequate. There have been needless delays in handling cases of injuries to workmen, and present Acts in force are not sufficiently comprehensive. All of these faults have been pointed out by the companies doing employers' liability business, and they are willing to co-operate and assist in rendering complete protection to all classes of labor, except in extra-hazardous employments, which neither they nor the State can afford to underwrite.

The Act should be amended in such a way that the Province can undertake to write risks, but that the private companies can operate and compete alongside of the Province for this class of business. An alternative plan might be instituted whereby the Province shall write the entire business, making same compulsory on the part of employers, and let this business out to the companies doing business in the Province under proper safeguards and guarantees. This is the Manitoba plan recently enacted by that Legislature.

If this Act is passed as at present drawn, we look for trouble. The Province will be caught with some heavy losses, which, to reimburse itself, will have to assess industry, making it expensive for the employer and not altogether satisfactory to the employee, who in the long run will have to pay the piper.

Unfortunately British Columbia is not a highly developed industrial community, and risks cannot be sufficiently distributed so that a serious accident will not be an onerous charge on a particular industry operating in the Province.

One cannot view but with deep concern the effect of the shortage of labor on our recovering industries. In mining, lumbering and various manufacturing establishments distributed throughout the Province, the growing shortage of experienced labor is being felt with increasing intensity. It is estimated that there is need for between three and four thousand hands, and this does not take into consideration labor needed in the development of agriculture in the Province.

In the larger centres of population there is an overplus of unskilled labor and "I Won't Work's," which cling tenaciously to the bread line and public and private charity. For the man honestly seeking work, and with any degree of adaptability, there is absolutely no reason for unemployment.

Just how serious an effect on industry this shortage of experienced or skilled labor will have cannot definitely be stated; but that it will grow in intensity as the months go by is certain. The people of the Province should enquire into the present Orders-in-Council regarding the exclusion of foreign labor, and petition the Dominion Government for their repeal.