

PACIFIC SECTION

FREIGHT RATES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

How They Affect the Coal Mining Industry—Embassy from the National Peace Association

Monetary Times' Office,
Vancouver, B.C., May 9th.

How industries are handicapped by prohibitive freight rates is exemplified in the cases of the coal mining companies operating in the Nicola Valley. Owing to the high rate charged by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, it was impossible for the Nicola Valley concerns to put in a tender for the supply of the year's coal for Vancouver city, with any hope that it would be below that of the companies controlling the Vancouver Island output. It has been conceded that the product to be found in the Nicola Valley is good, and before tenders were called, the city had used some of it to the complete satisfaction of the engineers. Yet, not only are the people the sufferers, but the coal operating companies are, as a result of the prohibitive tariff, confined to a limited district in the interior for their market. If coal were at a reasonable price, it would be different. At \$7.50 a short ton, and many are the complaints that the tons are very short, it is a large price for bituminous, especially when the carriage is all by water, and only a few miles at that.

As an indication of what can be done by other companies, C. T. Bowering & Co., a large firm operating in several large cities, placed a tender before the civic committee of \$5.50 per ton for coal. This was \$1 and more below the tender of local firms having control of the market. Moreover, it was claimed that the Bowering coal, obtained in Australia, had a grade of 15 per cent. more carbon. W. Leslie Comyn, of San Francisco, who appeared before the committee, pointed out that with advantageous labor conditions in Australia and cheap freight rates, they were enabled to place this coal in Vancouver at this price, being satisfied with a reasonable profit.

Cheap Coal From Australia.

The matter also opens up another point of view. When the financial stringency began last fall, a well-known financial man remarked to the Monetary Times that before conditions were again normal the prices of all commodities would drop. Stocks were the first, and since then there has been declines in various lines. Even now dry goods retailers are holding off making large sales, waiting for a reduction in prices. This is so in other departments of trade. The effect of cheaper coal from Australia will mean that if the British Columbia mines are to continue, labor must be cheaper, and profits must not be in excess of a reasonable figure. Labor is gradually becoming easier, with a marked difference between conditions now and a year ago, and that matters will eventually adjust themselves is the opinion of the best informed. All this will mean more favorable circumstances for the establishment of those industrial enterprises which are needed here.

There was a man here this week whose object is worthy of commendation from both employer and employed. He was P. H. Scullin, organizer for the National Industrial Peace Association, which has its headquarters in Stockton, Cal. The plan of operation is to establish branches in large cities, the board of directors to consist of an equal number of employers, employed and independent citizens. All industrial disputes arising are settled by this Board, which constitutes a permanent committee of arbitration. The Association was organized in 1904, and since then Mr. Scullin states many



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strikes and lockouts have been averted through its instrumentality.

The opportunities for trade on the Pacific Coast have evidently been appreciated by R. Crane & Company, of Chicago, manufacturers of valves, steam fittings, etc. Mr. Crane, the head of the firm, was in Vancouver this week. Twenty years ago he was here, when timber covered most of the townsites. That the progress of the community and the province impressed him is shown by his purchase of the plumbing supplies and steamfitting departments of the business of Boyd, Burns & Company, a long-established firm, which will henceforth devote its attention to its ship chandlery. Mr. Crane himself conducted the details of the purchase, and the introduction of a branch here is a compliment to the Pacific Province.

New Westminster Forges Ahead.

Happenings of the week have been very encouraging, indicative as they are of a resumption of the conditions which made times so good in British Columbia last year. A week ago, reference was made to the month's statistics of Vancouver and Victoria. It might be added that the land registry and customs returns of New Westminster show wonderful increases for April, 1908, as compared with those of a year ago. The figures are:—April, 1908, \$21,601 for customs; April, 1907, \$12,330, a jump of about 76 per cent. Land registry fees were \$2,254, a substantial increase over all previous months.

The British Columbia Copper Company, whose operations are practically the life of the town of Greenwood, in the Boundary district, has announced that it will restart its works as soon as men can be got together. The mines and smelter have been idle since early last November. As 700 men will be required, 500 at the mines and 200 at the smelter, the working force is a large one.

Further than that, some of the larger sawmills, which have been shut down for some weeks, are preparing to resume. Vancouver's bank clearings have an increase this week, the first for quite a while. Mining and fruit growing operations are steadily going ahead, all tending toward an improvement on a substantial and lasting basis.

The British Columbia Electric Railway Company, whose investments are larger perhaps than those of any other single concern in the Province, has a close touch on development, and the fact that it has extensive expansion in view shows its great faith in the future of the West. Apart from its new lines on the mainland, an expenditure of two millions of dollars is contemplated in and around Victoria. The opening up of Vancouver Island is proceeding rapidly, and, with great mineral, timber, fishery and agricultural resources, Victoria, among the many places on the island, will benefit in the greatest degree.

To those who can get on the land in British Columbia, there should be good markets for the various articles of produce. Figures are to hand which show the amount of mutton imported, and the very rapid and large increase in the shipments from Australia. Less than three years ago, 600 carcasses were brought in, but this year the total is 40,000. All this is for the market immediately in the Province. The supply was formerly secured in the United States. In butter, the trade has grown to the importation of 3,000 fifty-six pound boxes a year. But this comes in the early spring, and late winter, when the local article is not of the very best. In the well-moistened districts on the Coast, there is no more profitable occupation than dairying, and success attends the operations of all the creameries here.

The Kettle Valley Irrigation Company is proceeding with the irrigation of a large section of land in the Boundary district, which is admirably adapted for fruit-growing, and will construct a flume and trestle 1,400 feet in length in connection with the main canal. Land is also being cleared. Temple Godman and Lieut.-Col. W. H. M. Glossop, of London, England, directors of the company, have been examining the property, and have left for England.

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