

ACTIVITIES OF OUR TRADE AND COMMERCE DEPARTMENT.

The report of the Department of Trade and Commerce which has been issued at Ottawa, contains a record of the surprising activities of this Governmental department.

For the twelve months ended December 31st, 1916, the total of the imports for consumption and exports of Canadian produce — omitting coin and bullion — was \$1,858,433,294, of which imports amounted to \$766,726,891 and exports to \$1,091,706,403. In the last twelve months before the war the total for the same trade was \$995,152,685. The increase in total trade after twenty-nine months of war was thus \$863,280,609, or more than the whole trade for the fiscal year 1912.

The business of the Department of Trade and Commerce was, in the first place, swelled by the situation caused by the stoppage of trade with enemy countries and the opening of new channels for Canadian trade within the Empire and with the powers allied with Great Britain in the European struggle. The department was engaged in making known to Canadians the great new demands for raw materials. Later, when Great Britain restricted her exports and imports of various commodities, the department became the intermediary between the Canadians seeking to buy or sell goods in Britain and the British Government.

In October, 1915, when it became apparent that Canada would have a large exportable surplus of wheat, representations were made to the British Government with a view to interesting the Allied governments in the purchase of Canadian wheat. The Canadian Government was consequently requested to secure a large quantity of the grain for the Italian Government. It commandeered on November 27th all wheat of grades Nos. 1, 2 and 3 northern in elevators at the head of the Great Lakes and east of the Great Lakes at closing prices on the Winnipeg market that day. It thus secured 13,621,822 bushels, of which it released 1,736,313 bushels to meet the immediate needs of the flour millers of the country, 350,375 bushels to enable exporters to fulfil contracts for immediate delivery and sold 118,649 for Belgian relief. It was able to forward, with promptitude which elicited a congratulatory cablegram from the Italian commissioner in London, 11,381,400 bushels in sixty shiptoads to Italy. Of late, Sir George Foster, the head of the department, has brought to the attention of the farmers of Western Canada, Great Britain's offer to purchase the exportable surplus of the crop of 1917.

A number of other enterprises arising directly from the war have been undertaken by the department. The Ontario farmers' gift of agricultural products to the people of Great Britain was assembled and forwarded by officials of the department. Upon the recommendation of Sir George Foster a business men's commission was appointed and went to Britain, France, Belgium and Italy to study the opportunities for trade between Canada and those countries during the war and after its termination. Further, upon the report of a committee of the Privy Council, of which the Minister of Trade and Commerce was chairman, an Honorary Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research was appointed to promote the application of science and industry in Canada with a view to supplying Canadian needs and extending Can-

adian trade now and after the war is over. Steps were taken to develop a toy-making industry in Canada and the British exhibition of samples of German and Austrian wares was brought to Canada to show Canadian merchants and manufacturers the kind of goods those enemy countries had been selling in various foreign markets. At the same time Canadian trade commissioners were instructed to collect samples of goods which would indicate to Canadians the type of commodities they should export to different markets. This collection will be available for inspection before very long.

Further, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Sir George Foster, and his departmental officials have made large purchases in Canada for some of the Allied governments. In the autumn of 1914 they placed orders for the French Government for blankets, of which 406,716, valued at \$1,631,000, were forwarded to the purchasers.

Early in March, 1915, again the department, at the request of the South African Government, called for tenders and placed a contract for 35,999 bags of flour. These were delivered in New York and shipped to South Africa. In July of the same year, it was pointed out to the Canadian Government that mills for the production of underwear, sweaters and socks were practically idle. The Minister of Trade and Commerce thereupon obtained orders from the Italian Purchasing Commission for 600,000 undershirts and 400,000 blankets. The department undertook the inspection of the goods and made the payments for them. Up to February 15th last, 191,974 blankets and 1,909,624 shirts, costing in all \$2,282,119, were shipped to Italy.

SHIPPING AND PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

(Special Correspondence.)

About 40 years ago, there were launched from the yards all over Prince Edward Island, from 80 to 100 vessels each year, ranging in size from small schooners to large barques, and last year not a single vessel was built in this province, and of the once large fleet there now remains on our registers 15 steamers and 130 sailing vessels. The demand for tonnage created by the war, the scarcity of ships, the phenomenal use in freights and other causes which have led to the agitation for a revival of shipbuilding, have made their influence felt in this province, and a desire has sprung up among our people to see the "vanishing fleets" materialize again.

A petition, largely signed was presented to the Provincial Legislature last session, asking for a Royal Commission to inquire into the delays of schooners at coal ports.

The legislature, in response to the petition, asked the Federal Government by resolution passed in April, 1916, to appoint a Royal Commission. This Commission, consisting of W. E. Tupper, A. R. Tibbits and J. P. Macdonald, was appointed last September.

Their duties were: (a) To obtain the evidence of as many of the captains and owners of coasting vessels as possible re complaints of delays in loading coal. (b) To visit the coal mines, inspect the loading facilities, and interview officers of the coal companies.

The Commission completed their work in October, and submitted their report last December. They concluded, after a lengthy review of the situation, that

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there was reasonable ground for some of the complaints re delay in loading schooners with coal, that the condition is not due to any deliberate purpose of the coal companies, but rather to a combination of circumstances, that a remedy might be obtained if the vessel owners, through some permanent organization negotiate with the companies, that the Commission could recommend no effective legislation, but that if legislation were to be considered it must come from the Provincial legislature of Nova Scotia.

There has been no statement from the Government as yet as to the second phase of the question, viz., bonusing shipbuilding.

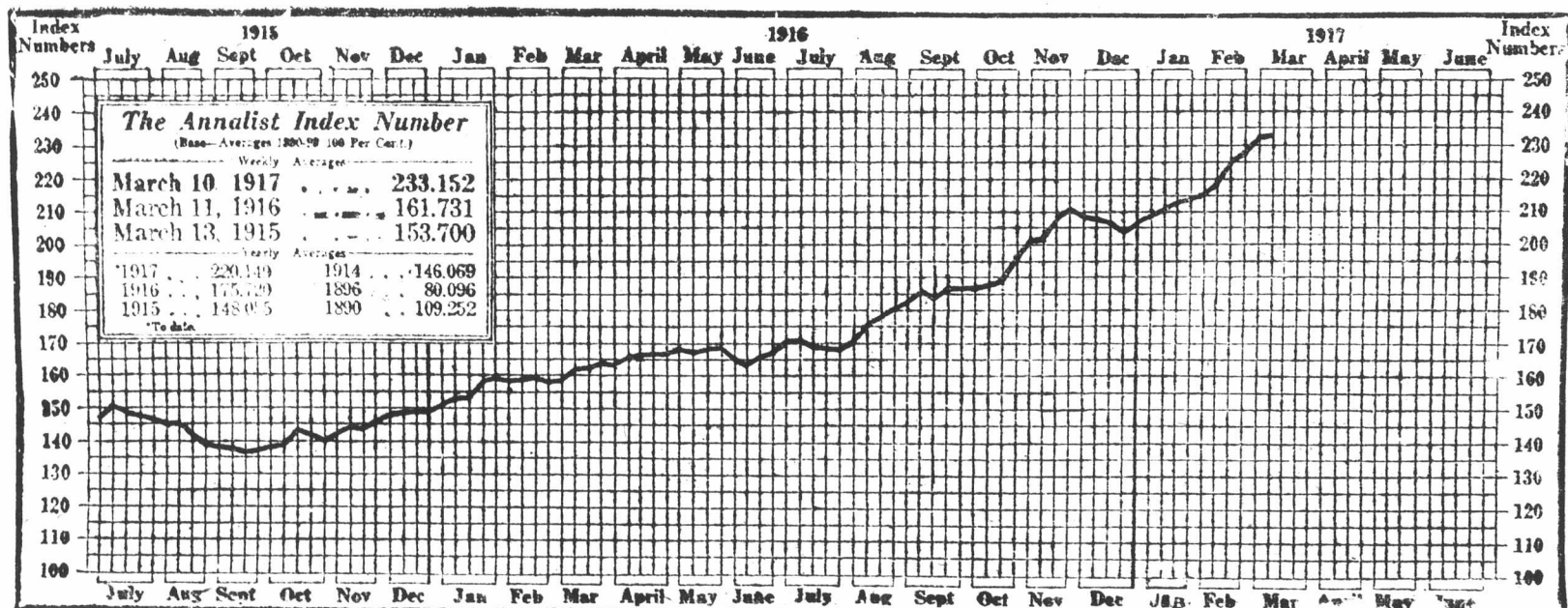
Donald Nicholson, M.P., one of the Conservative members for Queens County, in an address on shipbuilding before the Charlottetown Board of Trade, advocated a Government bonus or subsidy to inland shipbuilders for the building of wooden vessels from 40 to 100 tons. Lumber dealers declare that sufficient timber can yet be produced on the Island for such vessels, and there are still a number of the old shipbuilders left to direct operations.

The Labor Unions, the Island branch of the National Association of Marine Engineers of Canada, the Boards of Trade, have passed resolutions asking for the bonusing of not only wooden, but steel shipbuilding.

They point out that the revival of the industry will give employment winter and summer, not only to mechanics and laborers, but to our returned soldiers, and that the building of wooden ships will lead to the building of steel ships in the end.

That the agitation is likely to bear fruit is evident from an announcement recently made that several parties are planning to build 300 ton vessels at a cost of \$20,000 each, whilst the building of some smaller craft are talked of. If the government comes down with an offer of some financial encouragement it is highly probable that a good beginning may be made this spring. So far there is nothing definite to state.

Curve of the Cost of Living



An index number is a means of showing fluctuations in the average price of a group of commodities. The Annalist Index Number shows the fluctuations in the average wholesale price of twenty-five food commodities selected, and arranged to represent a theoretical family's food budget.