

Concerning the "Made in B. C." Campaign

(By Bruce McKelvie)

Ever since the intrepid builders of the Canadian Pacific Railway carved their way through the granite-ribbed gorges of the Rocky Mountains and linked the western colonies to the young Dominion with bands of shining steel, orators and writers have enthused over the "wonderful natural resources of British Columbia." To such an extent has this been done that it has become a sort of popular past-time; a kind of habit that has grown upon the residents of the province. The timber, mines, fertile valleys and waters of British Columbia have been lauded and toasted at nearly every banquet table for the past thirty years. Always there has been the vague prophecy that "when capital comes to take advantage of and develop the latent wealth with which Nature has so lavishly endowed us, ours will be the most prosperous portion of the New World."

With their eyes ever turned toward the money markets of the East, residents of British Columbia have been watchfully waiting for the invading army of capitalists, from whom such enormous benefits could be expected. Any time that a man, even remotely connected with the industrial kings of the nation made his appearance he was seized upon by public bodies who fed him and introduced to him the most gifted speakers of the community, who filled his ears with high sounding phrases in praise of the undeveloped resources of the country.

During the time that we have been entertaining ourselves and our guests with geographical and statistical lessons of our own province, small industries have been establishing themselves unheralded in the province. Those behind them did not represent "Big Capital," but they invested their money and their time in trying to do in a small way what we have been demanding and expecting in a large measure. Individually these concerns may be small, but in the aggregate they are large.

But no brass bands were at hand to welcome these investors to British Columbia, and no civic celebrations marked the opening of their plants, yet they are seeking to bring industrial prosperity to British Columbia, and will do so if they can get that measure of co-operation and assistance from the residents of this province that they have the right to expect.

There are in British Columbia approximately 1700 manufacturing concerns at the present time. Of this number something over 600 are situated in and about the city of Vancouver. There is a large number centred about Victoria. Wherever they are located, the manufacturers of British Columbia are endeavoring to provide commodities that will meet in quality and price those articles with which they have to compete—and yet the majority of them are small concerns. The buying public of this province gives preference to the imported commodities which are in direct competition with the products that are made in British Columbia. This is a situation which is peculiar to this country, and is a condition which is retarding the proper industrial development of the province, for which all are eagerly awaiting.

Some idea of the manner in which British Columbians give preference to the commodities manufactured in foreign countries can be gleaned from the 1919 figures for the first eight months of that year. These figures are the latest available from reliable sources. It may be stated that British Columbia is the third province in the Dominion in the number of industries, and in the comparisons herewith presented, imports more than those sections of Canada where there are but comparatively few manufacturing plants:

British Columbia (merchandise only).....	\$39,541,757
Nova Scotia	21,948,942
New Brunswick	21,515,597
Manitoba	31,772,977
Prince Edward Island	690,225
Alberta	11,554,228
Saskatchewan	10,783,082

The total amount of merchandise imported into British Columbia, from abroad, for home consumption only, in 1919 was \$63,694,691. In 1917 the total amount was \$42,140,148.

Consider these figures for one moment. We have increased our importations of merchandise for home consumption in two years by 50 per cent.

Every dollar that is expended for merchandise gives employment to some person. When the housewife buys a commodity over the counter she is providing work for some artisan.

The people of British Columbia have been giving employment to thousands of men and women in foreign lands, in whom they have no personal interest, and at the same time they have been looking forward to the development of this province.

The figures quoted, it must be borne in mind, are totals of foreign goods brought into British Columbia for merchandising purposes. They do not include the domestic importations; the commodities brought into British Columbia in competition with the goods manufactured here.

A rough idea of what it means to support home industries may be gathered from estimates of one or two lines which figure in the daily sales of merchants in every community.

It is calculated that the male population of British Columbia, over the age of 15 years spend annually about \$8,000,000 for boots and shoes. The factories of this province, of which there are several, obtain only about 10 per cent. of this trade. Thousands of expert shoe workers obtain steady employment manufacturing the footwear for the men of this province, but only one in ten of them reside in the country. The other nine spend their wages in other cities and towns in which the British Columbian is not interested.

The men of this country spend approximately \$1,200,000 yearly in cigars. Hundreds of cigar makers, strippers and packers are employed to manufacture these. Less than 100 of them are our neighbors.

It costs \$500,000 to equip the throats of the British Columbia men with neckties. Several hundred men and women find profitable employment in manufacturing this article of clothing. Only about a dozen spend their wages in British Columbia.

The women of this province spend each year in blouses and neckwear about \$3,840,000. Many hundreds of women—and men too—are provided with their living from this trade, but only a small percentage of them are contributing to the upbuilding of British Columbia. The others are contributing to the development of other localities.

It would require a freight train of seventeen cars, each bearing 60,000 pounds, or 30 tons, to haul the baking powder that is used by the housewives of British Columbia each year. There are a number of firms in the province that are producing high quality baking powder—but a yarding engine could shunt the total amount of their combined product without causing any commotion at a railway freight terminal. The workmen who profit by its use in British Columbia are mainly resident many thousands of miles away from this "land of wonderful industrial possibilities."