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British Prohibition of Imports and the Province

Remedies to Correct the Shortage in Tonnage by Increasing Home Production and Decreasing Non-Essential Imports Will Have No Adverse Effect on British Columbia Industry.

The great speech of the British premier in the British parliament on February 24th last was the answer to some of the most pressing problems facing Great Britain and the Empire, and had a great effect on business, not only in the Empire, but in those countries with whom Britain trades.

In outlining the solutions which it was hoped would have a material influence in correcting the present adverse economic situation, the premier pointed to the shortage of tonnage as affecting the food supply in Great Britain. The shortage in tonnage was due, not only to submarine warfare, but also to the necessity of placing a large number of ships in the war service of the armies of Britain and the Allies. The effect of both causes was to threaten seriously the regular and available supply of food to feed the people.

After narrating the poor agricultural results of the year, the premier pointed out two remedies. The first was to increase home production by instituting plans to use all agricultural land for the planting and cultivation of crops. The second remedy (which has already gone into effect) is the prohibition of imports of articles and commodities that are not necessary for the waging of war, nor that can be used as food.

When both remedies have been given, in large measure, their proper effect, there will result very marked and favourable changes in Great Britain. If, for instance, England could be brought to the agricultural development of France and Holland and Belgium before the war, literally millions of tons of food products would no longer need to be imported. It cannot be hoped to produce such development before the advent of peace, but the results from the success of home production this autumn will have a tremendous effect on the shipping situation, if only normal agricultural conditions prevail.

The prohibition of imports of non-essentials will have only a less effect in the solution of the problem. In some phases of the problem stern measures have been adopted. In two particulars the recommendation is remarkable.

Beef cattle are to be killed in larger numbers than formerly, to the point of depleting herds. The killing of beeves will increase the supply of meat and decrease the importation of cattle feeds. Then, also, the premier requires the leveling of forests to supply the lumber demand, and at the same time prohibits the importation of lumber.

Prohibited articles of import include all classes of luxuries and a large list of articles which Englishmen have long regarded as necessities. The institution of these

prohibitions will have a serious effect on some of the allied countries, such as France and Italy, neutrals such as Holland, the Scandinavian countries, and the United States, and to some extent the outlying Dominions and possessions of the Empire. But the premier pointed out that these are stern times which demand stern measures.

The announcement of British policy gave momentary concern to the business interests of Canada, and in particular of British Columbia. It was, however, soon ascertained that the adverse effects on trade of the Dominion would be almost nil.

Increased production of grain in Britain cannot for a moment change the enormous export demand for Canadian grain. The wastage of war in Europe is too severe for this remedy to exercise a material influence on Dominion export trade. In Eastern Canada some interests may be affected which export prohibited articles to Britain. The United States will suffer on this score much more intensely.

British Columbia industry and production can scarcely be touched. The minerals that

the province produces are badly needed for war purposes. Most of the lumber business being done with Britain in the province is for the Admiralty, and will not be affected. The scarcity of bottoms is such that we cannot do any business there except in the above case. If we had the available bottoms, the Australian trade would take all we could export. The prohibition of news print has not the slightest bearing on our provincial manufacture. The local and United States demand could take all the output if the production were increased tenfold. The prohibition of fish and canned salmon, it was at first thought, would seriously interfere with the industry. But here, again, fish has risen to remarkable heights in price because of Canadian and United States demand. Canned salmon is an article in the

On March 12 the Government will call on the people of Canada to participate in the winning of the war by furnishing, next to men, the most important instrument of waging war. The patriotism of the people is on trial. The financial ability is here to subscribe for two or three times the amount that will be offered. The people of British Columbia could subscribe, without sacrifice, five millions of dollars in place of the two millions they subscribed to the Second Loan. What could they do if they had the spirit of sacrifice that actuates the people of Britain and France?

Let British Columbia do her full duty.