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Telephone Seymour 4057.

BRADFORD W. HEYER, Editor and Publisher.

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The problem of making ends meet in provincial governmental expenditure during these strenuous times is difficult, and the Premier is to be congratulated that he is making such efforts to do so. Yet it must be confessed that his estimates look at this moment too roseate to succeed in fulfillment at the end of the fiscal year, ending March 31, 1918.

The real property tax he estimates will return \$1,330,000 as against an estimate last year of \$450,000; personal property taxes are estimated to bring in \$700,000 as against \$225,000 last year, and land taxes on wild land, coal and timber lands are estimated to yield \$915,000 as against \$520,000 the previous year. Heavy increases are noted, which are to be made up by increased taxation; but there are limits to revenue production. Large amounts of taxes are in arrears at this date from real and personal property, wild land, coal lands and timber lands, yet it is determined to increase taxes on these classes of property which appear to have reached the maximum for revenue purposes. If the object of the legislation is to drive property back in the right of the Crown then there might be justification for the increase, but as a revenue measure, it is doubtful of bringing in the amounts as stated above. A better expedient might be to keep much of these taxes as they are and use the energy of the tax department to garner in the arrears.

Then there appears to be a manifest injustice in increasing timber taxes. Two years ago the government settled on a plan of taxation which would hold for a period of about forty years. This not only provided for an increase each five year period, but also for increased royalty when the price of lumber advanced beyond the set figure of normal price. Everything practically has gone up except the price of lumber, yet the lumber industry will be forced to pay increased taxation in the face of an understanding fixed with the timber holders and lumber manufacturers covering a long period of years. If, however, the price of lumber advances to a considerable extent, as appears probable, the lumber industry will pay more taxes without additional taxes being levied.

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.

In view of this situation it strikes us that the government has not availed itself of the possibilities in metalliferous mining. The mineral tax is estimated to yield \$300,000 as against \$100,000 last year. This could be largely increased without proving burdensome and could be based on the average selling price of metals mined. When the mining interests made investments in this province they did not contemplate thirty-two cent copper or seventy-five cent silver or ten cent zinc or eight cent lead, and mining operators could be taxed a moderate amount on these high prices which would yield heavily without stultifying the industry. In fact British Columbia copper producers have an exceptional position in the world copper markets. The United States having entered the war, copper producers in the United States have agreed to sell to that government copper metal at twenty-two cents per pound. Provincial producers have no such disability, and they may charge the market rate whether it is to be used for war or domestic purposes. A tax imposed on them, based on selling price, should not prove onerous.

The imposition of a poll tax as a war measure is justifiable. Care is to be taken that its collection does not involve too heavy an expenditure.

The Amusement Ticket Tax is admirable. The basis of taxation at this time above all others, is that of taxing luxuries or non-essentials. We believe that the principle of the Amusement Tickets Tax should be carried much further. If the government decides on a do-nothing policy regarding the liquor traffic, then this class of taxes should be rigorously advanced. Automobile taxes should be increased. The purchase of a new automobile should have a tax levied based on purchase price. And so on throughout the whole gamut of production, sale and use of luxuries and non-essentials. Let us hope that the heavier taxes will tend toward their discouragement in these stern times. An ingenious finance minister could devise hundreds of taxes that would be just, justifiable, and at the same time would tend toward correcting evils of waste and extravagance in the body social and politic.

When there are so many avenues of taxation available along the lines of increased profits induced by war demands, and luxuries it should be the object of the government to disturb as little as possible businesses which engage in production or general service to consumptive demands. Then let not finance ministers be too disturbed with government deficits. They are excellent tonics for public consumption and generally force them into insistence on governmental economy and at the same time prepare them for increased taxation. A finance minister should shun a surplus as he shuns the devil. From present outlook, however, a surplus to be abhorred will be the least of his troubles for years to come.