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Government and Business Efforts to Meet Emergency

Conference Called by Premier Pledges Provincial Government and the Larger Municipalities to Continue All Public Work to Mitigate Unemployment—The Banks Assure No Curtailment of Credit.

At the instance of Sir Richard McBride, a representative gathering of business men, bankers, municipal officials, members of Parliament, and cabinet ministers, met in his office on August 25th last to discuss ways and means of meeting the crisis of war. Hopefulness, confidence, and optimism were the dominant notes.

The Premier was supported by all his ministers, and in opening the proceedings, made it clear that, while it had not been possible, at such short notice, to invite representatives from all over the Province, he had endeavored to secure such a gathering of those within reach of the Capital as would fairly represent all important Provincial interests. The conference was not called in any spirit of alarm, but rather in a spirit of confidence, and to allay any apprehensions which might get abroad, affecting the stability of our business. He thought that the strongest ground which could be taken would be to show that the Government intended and was in a position to take the lead in the fulfilment of its public pledges.

While necessary economies would be practised here and there as a matter of ordinary prudence, it was the intention of the Government to carry out their programme of public works in its entirety, not only so, but he had every reason to believe that the Dominion Government had decided upon and would carry out a similar policy.

With respect to that large and important branch of public works, which fell under the heading of railway construction, he was enabled to announce, on the authority of the president of the P. G. E., that work would proceed without cessation, and that the railway would reach Lil-loet before the winter set in.

With respect to the Canadian Northern, Sir Donald Mann, the vice-president, would arrive in Victoria tomorrow, but he already had assurances by wire that the main line from the Coast would be completed within about four months; also the further assurance that the line between

Victoria and Patricia Bay would be finished as soon as possible.

With respect to the Kettle Valley Railway, he understood from Mr. Warren, the president, that arrangements had been made for work to be carried on continuously. All this, he thought, was, under the circumstances, highly gratifying.

With respect to the industries of the Province, he could only regret that there were certain unfavorable features

brought about by the state of war now existing, especially as regards the mining industry. Until a few weeks ago, the revival in the Kootenays was one of the most marked and pleasing features of our industrial activity; our mines were, for the first time, beginning to do themselves justice; they had developed large areas of ore bodies and were engaged in shipping tonnages which were netting handsome profits for the mine owners. If this could have continued, there would have been a banner year in the Kootenay, and the largest totals on record would have been reached.

Unfortunately, the collapse of the metal markets had necessitated the temporary closing of the smelters and mines, and this condition would react on the coal mines. The whole question was receiving the most serious consideration of the Government. It was hoped that in consultation with the Federal Government some means might be devised, such as the establishment of a temporary and arbitrary value for silver, to be adjusted after the war, as would enable the silver-lead mines to resume

operations. With respect to the copper market, conditions might change at any moment and justify resumption of work in the mines and smelters. There was one gleam of sunshine in the fact that the Granby smelter at Anyox would continue at work.

With respect to the lumbering industry, it was a matter of common knowledge that for more than a year this, the greatest of our Coast industries, had been under a cloud. The export trade had fallen off and few of the enterprises engaged in the industry had been revenue-producing. One remedy for this was being sought through the Minister of Trade and Commerce, in endeavoring to secure a new and more extensive foreign market. There had, however, been

Telegram sent by the Premier, Sir Richard McBride, to the Editor British Columbia Financial Times, received too late for publication in issue of August 15th:

Victoria, August 14th.

Editor,
B. C. Financial Times,
319 Pender Street West,
Vancouver, B. C.

In answer to your inquiry through the Attorney-General, permit me to say that, as at present advised, the Provincial Government proposes to proceed with the programme of development for the current year as authorized by the last session of the Legislature.

It is highly desirable, notwithstanding the war, to preserve the business equilibrium of the country; and though efforts may have to be redoubled to achieve this end, we should all be prepared to do our best.

There is no cause for undue concern or alarm in British Columbia, and if our people maintain the high standard of efficiency for which the Province has been long noted, we cannot fail. To pursue this line is not only to meet present day requirements, but also to prepare in the most pronounced way for any tests that may be applied in the future.

RICHARD McBRIDE.