

POOR DOCUMENT

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THE EVENING TIMES AND STAR, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 1918

SCOTTISH FIRM READY TO ESTABLISH SHIPBUILDING YARD AT HALIFAX

Shipbuilding Commission Report Discloses Negotiations With Wm. Beardmore Co.

FOUR MILLION PLANT PROPOSED

But War Exigencies and Demands of Builders at Home Prevented Commencement of Plant—Vital Importance of Plant for Ship Plates—30,000 Tons Building in Nova Scotia

In the House of Assembly, Halifax, a few days ago, as already reported, Hon. G. H. Murray tabled a report of a shipbuilding commission which showed that shipbuilding in Nova Scotia was progressing and nearly 30,000 tons of ships are now under construction, exclusive of fishing schooners.

The Ship Commission's Report.

The report of the commission states that the commission met for organization on May 30. From information then in possession of the members, it was seen that the wood shipbuilding industry in the province of Nova Scotia had developed during the preceding two or three years from a condition of general dullness and neglect to one of much activity and gratifying prosperity. This revival was, of course, stimulated by war conditions and the abnormal demand for every class of ocean tonnage; and, with true maritime instinct, the Nova Scotia builders were quick to see and seize the opportunity to restore the industry, and at the same time make well earned profits from their enterprise. Accurate statistics were not available, but a careful estimate of the completed vessels throughout the province in 1916 would bring the number to about sixty, aggregating 12,000 registered tons, and a total cost of \$1,200,000.

Skill of Our Workmen.

At the time of the formation of the commission, reports received from the different shipbuilding districts indicated that the resources of the province, in suitable yards and labor, were pretty fully employed. Subsequent visits by the commission to several districts in various parts of Nova Scotia confirmed this information, and also afforded a first hand opportunity for observing the superior skill of the workmen, and for inspecting well designed vessels of complete size and in all stages of completion. These tours afforded the commission a very great pleasure indeed, and it would



R. C. Harris, honorary fuel controller for Ontario.

here desire to record its appreciation of the high value, both in an industrial and patriotic sense, which it attaches to the services of all those who are engaged in building ships. It is estimated that the vessels completed in Nova Scotia in 1917 reached 20,000 registered tons, at a cost of \$2,500,000. This quite considerable production was carried out on the resources of the builders themselves, save where, in rare cases, banking accommodation was temporarily required; but, in no instance was it represented to the commission that any financial assistance was either desired or required from the province. On the date of this report, according to our best information, the complete shipbuilding programme, exclusive of fishing schooners, now being carried out in the province of Nova Scotia reaches nearly 30,000 tons and is a very creditable showing. It is an honor roll worthy of a high place among the records of Canadian industry and patriotism.

Steel Shipbuilding.

The inquiries and efforts of the commission have, therefore, been chiefly taken up with steel shipbuilding, and at their outset its members were in general agreement that the policy it should recommend was the establishment of one large, well-equipped yard in preference to several small ones. The best advice obtainable was also in the same direction, and was, moreover, in full agreement with the commission's own views that every effort should be made to encourage the participation of established shipbuilding firms of undoubted standing in any project which might be started in the province. This, in due time, led to negotiations with Wm. Beardmore & Co., Ltd., of Dalmuir, Scotland, which is one of the largest and most reputable firms on the Clyde. That company contemplated associating with it in the Nova Scotia enterprise two other British shipbuilding firms, and one of the largest Canadian corporations. These negotiations were carried on until the end of August, when, on behalf of the syndicate, T. S. N. Dickson, representing Wm. Beardmore & Co., Ltd., stated to the commission that the associated companies had arrived at an agreement, if the subsidies to be offered by the province and municipalities were satisfactory, to establish a steel shipbuilding plant in Halifax harbor at an initial cost of \$4,000,000.

Offered a Subsidy.

"The time had thus arrived for the commission to decide on its financial policy, and, after full consideration of the measure of assistance which it could recommend for this proposal, or for any other bona fide proposition which might thereafter be made to it for building steel ships in any part of Nova Scotia, the commission, after consultation with the government, finally embodied its policy in the following telegram which was dispatched to Mr. Dickson on Aug. 3, 1917:

On the understanding that the principals you represent will make an initial investment of \$4,000,000 in a steel shipbuilding plant in this province, the Nova Scotia Shipbuilding Commission will recommend to the provincial government that a subsidy at the rate of 10 per cent of that investment, or \$400,000, shall be offered to the Steel Shipbuilding Company which will be organized by your principals, the said subsidy to be paid to the company on completion of each vessel, at the rate of \$4 per ton gross register until the total subsidy shall have been exhausted. It will therefore follow that if the initial investment falls short of \$4,000,000, the subsidy which this commission will recommend that the provincial government shall then offer will continue to be at the rate of 10 per cent on that actual investment. The object of this offer on the part of the commission is to promptly assist the prevailing acute situation in shipping, and it is understood that we will receive a reply from

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your principals within thirty days and that bona fide operations in the construction of the shipbuilding plant will commence promptly, with a view of producing tonnage within twelve months from this date.

Couldn't Complete Agreement.

"The chairman of the commission, who was in England on private business, visited the works of Wm. Beardmore & Company, Limited, in the end of August when he learned that circumstances of pressing importance, then arising from war exigencies, rendered it impossible for the time being at least, for that firm's British associates to complete the agreement to establish in Nova Scotia, this failure at the last moment was a great disappointment to the commission, as it was also to Sir William Beardmore who throughout enjoyed a deep personal interest in the project. His company, however, stands ready to consider any fresh proposals which may hereafter be made to it provided the restrictions imposed by the British government on operations or investments outside of the United Kingdom, on the part of British subjects, will not render this impossible.

"During all this time numerous inquiries came to the commission from parties in Canada and the United States, but, as a general thing when traced back, these inquiries were not of a character which the commission could approve. Even in Nova Scotia itself we did not discover that there was any capital awaiting investment in this industry, and the only outsiders who came to us, who visited Nova Scotia, with but only a few exceptions, were apparently only willing to embark on the enterprise if the province and municipalities furnished the capital.

"The fact of the matter is, that although Premier Lloyd George declared that, 'in shipping lies victory for the Allies,' all the conditions were against laying down a new steel shipyard in Nova Scotia. The Old Country yards were constantly employed with force contracts, and were therefore large importers of plates. The entrance of the United States into the war launched a stupendous shipbuilding programme in that country, and only with great difficulty was the Imperial Munitions Board at Ottawa able to arrange for a limited supply of American plates for the existing Canadian shipyards.

Establishment of Plate Mills.

"The key to the Canadian situation appeared to the commission to lie in providing in Canada itself for the rolling of our own ship's plates, and the very first act of the commission was to make such a representation to the Canadian prime minister, to the Dominion Iron & Steel Company, Limited, and to the several Federal members from the province of Nova Scotia."

"Out of the Question."

"The report also had a letter from Mark Workman, president of the Dominion Steel Corporation, Ltd., in which he stated that 'an immediate increase in our steel output is out of the question, as it would involve additional development of iron furnaces and the installation of a larger blooming mill. We are making certain efforts in this direction. It must be borne in mind that the purchase and installation of a modern plate mill would probably require at least eighteen months for completion. The capital expenditure would, in our opinion, be out of all proportion to the tonnage of plates which it would be possible to produce of the equipment, and we could not therefore regard the venture from a purely commercial standpoint.

Would Be Sound Policy.

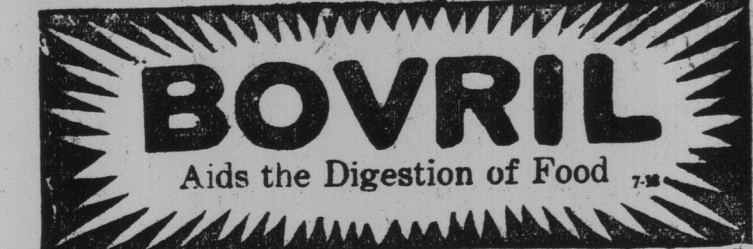
"Doubtless there were many and weighty reasons," says the report, "why no action was taken at the time, and for the commission's representations being unsatisfactory, but in the light of events, we cannot but think it would have been sound policy then to prepare to roll plates in Canada. The Admiralty controller has advised: 'It would be of great service if arrangements could be made whereby ship's plates could be rolled in Canada,' and the British Minister of Shipping has expressed himself as willing to arrange for the building and purchase of further ships in Canada in addition to those now under construction. We think we are warranted in saying that the industry in Canada, prior to the war, was very much neglected, but the credit must be given to the Imperial Munitions Board for its efforts in the past three years.

"As a matter of interest, it may be recorded here that, immediately prior to the operations of the Imperial Munitions Board at Ottawa, the Dominion government undertook on behalf of the Imperial authorities to build steel trawlers and wooden drifters, the cost approximating \$11,000,000. Most of these are now completed. The Imperial Munitions Board has let contracts for forty-six wooden and forty-four steel ships, the former costing about \$24,000,000 and the latter \$38,000,000. The wooden ships are 2,500 and 3,200 tons deadweight each, and the steel ships 3,400 to 5,600 tons each. It is expected that all these will be completed this year, when the board for financial reasons will withdraw from that business. The Dominion government, on its own account, has

undertaken a fresh programme of building steel ships in the various existing yards. This, it is reported, will involve an expenditure of \$40,000,000, but we are of opinion that this programme is inadequate, in as much as no provision is made for starting the industry on the Atlantic coast. It is there we submit that at all times, particularly while the war lasts, and during the period of demobilization, that the maritime interests of Canada will mainly centre, and we would therefore respectfully urge the claims of Nova Scotia in this regard upon the attention of the government at Ottawa.

Nova Scotia Resources.

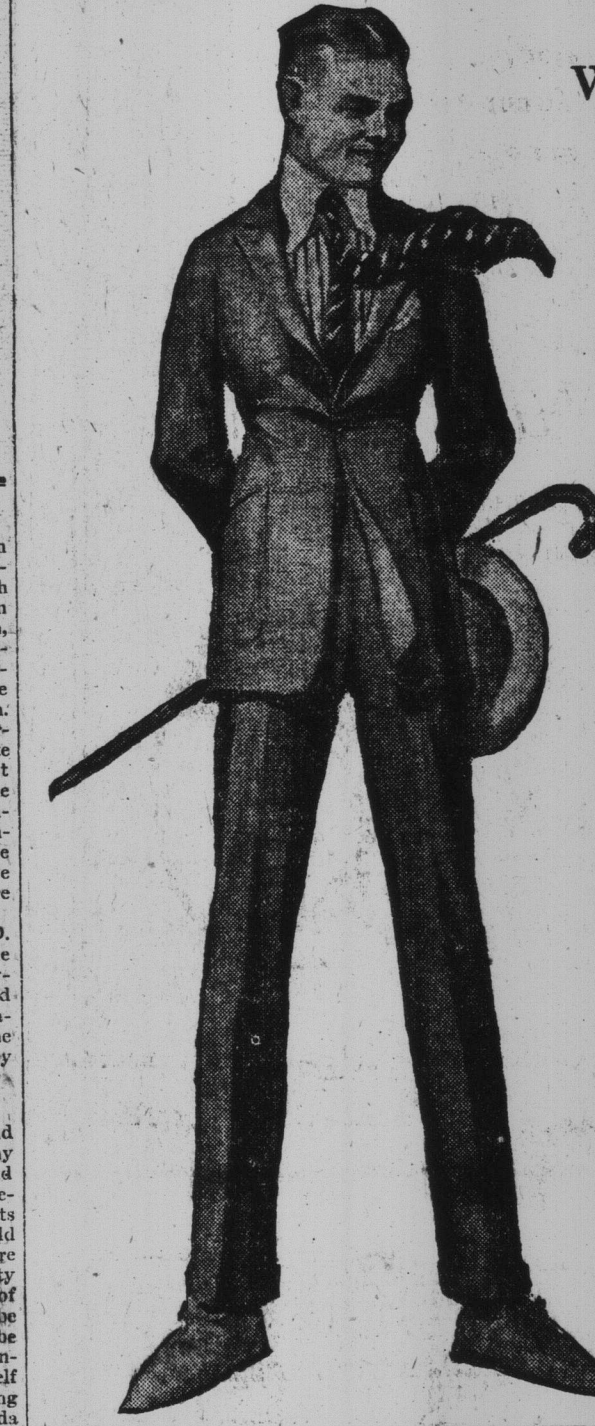
"Many obvious difficulties will surround a permanent steel shipbuilding industry, but these will be less on the Atlantic than in any other part of Canada. Nova Scotia is rich in raw materials, can easily be equipped to furnish fabricated parts and offers a choice of more than one excellent location for a shipyard. The workmen of the province, who have shown such well tested skill in building wooden ships, can, we are



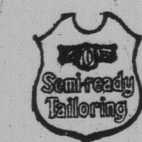
confident, also build ships of steel. This, if proof were needed, has been demonstrated at New Glasgow, where, under the enthusiastic direction of Colonel Thomas Cantley, the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company, Limited, has completed and placed in commission one fine vessel, will soon be ready to launch a second and larger one, and a third of the same class is under way. We would observe in conclusion, that, while in our judgment, under present industrial and financial conditions, nothing less than

co-operation on the part of the Dominion government will be adequate to establish a steel shipbuilding industry on a permanent basis in Nova Scotia, yet, the commission's firm conviction is that the action of the government of this province in setting on foot this enquiry cannot but result in much good."

Durkin Robertson, 30, who married his mother-in-law, following his wife's demise, failed to get exemption from the New York draft board.



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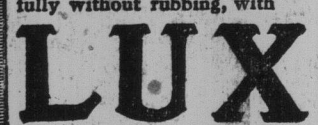
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