

Ships and Shipping in Canada

The National Ships of Canada

How they Work to Promote National and Imperial Trade.— The West Indies a Promising Field.—Stopping a Sugar Shortage

By DAVID KALSIE.

Canada's great area is equal to 30 countries the size of the British Isles, and the population of the whole area is only about one-sixth that of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Canada could look inward for thousands of miles. The ocean paths were open, but only to the minority. The majority of Canadians probably have never seen the sea. Their view point, like their environment, is insular although we could touch one country almost at all points along a four-thousand-mile boundary line. That sort of a situation produces national thinking only. The international habit does not come until there are means of contact with other lands. To all others we were shut out. One development alone could give us the means of expansion along international trading lines. That development was a fleet of ships. Of that fleet Canada-built, Canada-owned, Canada-controlled, we have already sixteen sturdy vessels varying between 3,750 dead-weight tons, and 8,400 dead-weight tons, in operation between ports in Canada, the United Kingdom, the British West Indies, Cuba and South America. Within a few weeks Australia will be included in the list. Sailings to other ports in Great Britain and elsewhere are now under consideration.

The Canadian federal plan calls for a fleet of sixty ships having a gross dead-weight of approximately 300,000 tons. They belong to Canadians as a whole. Canadian Government Merchant Marine Limited is the name of the company to operate them under the direction of Canadian National Railways.

National Ships and West Indies.

Already—no doubt because of the ships—there is a quickening of interest among Canadian business men in outside affairs that up to a few months ago excited scarcely any comment. In late weeks the West Indies, for example—at least their relation to Great Britain and to Canada—have occupied considerable space in the daily grist to the Press. The trade of the West Indies with Canada has developed into a interesting topic in business Canada. That trade at present does not worry federal statisticians who keep record of the Nation's business dealings abroad, but it has wonderfully bright possibilities. "National" ships have made 14 voyages to and from the West Indies. They have carried southbound practically all classes of general merchandise, and they bring back the goods Canada imports from those fertile sunny lands. That is all very well for a beginning, but in the future there ought to be, between Canada and the West Indies, a development of trading that would make the present figures appear utterly insignificant.

The West Indies import approximately 65 million dollars' worth of flour, rice, salt meats, fertilizers, boots and shoes, beer and wine, apparel, haberdashery, bags and sacks, hats and bonnets, lard, condensed milk, corn meal, soap, butter, wood and timber, hardware, machinery, dried fish, coal, and cottons, each year. Cottons constitute the most valuable single group, 7 million dollars being the amount estimated yearly; flour however, is a close second, \$6,650,000 worth being imported in 12 months. Other large groups are dried fish, coal, rice, salt meats, hardware, fertilizers, boots and shoes, and woods and timber.

Of those imports Canada furnishes less than 4 million dollars' worth of bread stuffs, only \$12,600 worth of meat; \$10,000 in machinery; \$130,000 in hardware; \$11,000 in apparel; \$405,000 in wool; \$1,400 in boots and shoes; \$127,000 in butter and cheese; \$19,300 in vehicles; \$285 in lard; \$145 in hats and bonnets and \$23,000 in fruit.

The West Indies export normally goods to the value of approximately 66 million dollars in one year. The list includes, sugar, cocoa, rum, molasses, coconut and copra, bananas, chicle, lime juice, coffee, sponges, gold, spices, limes, hides and skins, tobacco, diamonds, salt, oranges, arrowroot, canned fruit, asphalt, hemp, balata, rice, mineral oil, vegetables, cotton, wood manufactures, logwood and extracts.

Where We Could Increase Trade.

Canada imports more than \$31,000,000 worth of sugar in a year, and only \$18,000,000 worth of this comes from the West Indies. She imports \$1,500,000 worth of cocoa, and gets about one-third of that from the West Indies. In molasses there is a better showing as our imports are \$2,000,000, and \$1,800,000 worth of it comes from the West Indies. We import \$3,800,000 worth of vegetables, \$18,000 worth comes from the West Indies. We import \$159,000 worth of lime juice and get only \$6,000 worth from the West Indies. We import more than \$14,000,000 of mineral oil and get none at all from the West Indies. We import two and a quarter million dollars' worth of coffee and get only approximately one quarter of a million from the West Indies. We import \$70,000 worth of sponges getting only \$9,000 worth from the West Indies. We import more than half a million dollars' worth of spices, of which less than \$40,000 comes from the West Indies. We import \$4,000,000 of oranges and grape fruits and get less than \$40,000 from the West Indies.

A few years ago the publishing of these figures in Canada would have excited little, if any, interest. To-day they represent a real opportunity for quite an imposing list of manufacturers in Canada. These manufacturers are already beginning to take advantage of the facilities furnished by the National ships. Flour and grain, cement, rubber goods, meat, pine lumber, oil-meal, pork, hay, hardware, salt fish, confectionery, auto tires, furniture, iron pipes, oil cake, are included among the products carried south. Recently a vessel for Buenos Ayres carried some harvesting machinery, which is expected to be but the vanguard of large shipments of Canadian made goods in that line. The ships to South America and to Cuba carry much the same general cargo as that enumerated above, and as in the case of the West Indies there is a wide gap between the exports and imports that Canada now trades in, and the exports and imports she might trade in if the opportunities in that direction were more fully developed. Officials of Canadian Government Merchant Marine Limited are now on their way to the south seas to ascertain better the lines this development in trade should follow.

The Direct Shipment Policy.

There is another aspect of Canadian foreign trade, that will be greatly modified if not entirely removed, as the country's commerce with outside lands grows by the utilization of our national ves-

sels. In Canada we have been at the losing end as far as a considerable list of imports has been concerned. Our friends to the south have been acting as intermediary. They have been importing goods from other lands and we have been importing from them. There seems to be no valid reason why this unsatisfactory system of conducting business should go on now that we have the ships to bring the goods in question from foreign lands to Canadian ports. There is no valid reason why American vessels and American railroads and American brokers should profit out of the handling of these Canadian imports, if the National ships of Canada can bring the goods direct to Canadian shores.

Officers of the Canadian Government Merchant Marine Limited and Canadian National Railways in seeking out tonnage for the National boats find this feature of Canadian trading to be a real barrier in the finding of cargo. A large number of Canadian manufacturers have traded heretofore with outside countries, and it appears to have been a general custom to sell their goods through American firms. These American firms, naturally, have a good deal to say when it came to the matter of routing the tonnage so handled. Consequently there has begun, since the National boats have been in service, a movement to show Canadian manufacturers the advantages of doing business direct with foreign houses, in this way developing ports in Canada and providing tonnage for the rails and ships of the National lines.

Prevented Sugar Shortage.

It is not generally realized now for these Canadian-owned vessels operated to save Canada from the dire effects of a sugar shortage recently. Eleven vessels were utilised to bring in raw sugar from Cuba direct to the docks of Canadian Refineries. The total tonnage would probably be in excess of 35,000 tons. There is no doubt that a serious sugar crisis was averted because of the availability of these vessels for this service. No privately-owned boats were operating in that trade, and the probabilities are that we would have awaited the convenience of privately-owned lines to bring this necessary product to our shores.

As ship owners and operators, Canadians are on the threshold of a vast development. This will not come suddenly, but it should be a healthy growth. The object lesson of the Motherland can always be referred to. But a flexible fleet of Nationally-owned commerce carriers is a venture that has passed the experimental stage. Canadian producers, Canadian railways, Canadian sailors, and Canadian ports, are all gainers because of the inauguration of the policy of publicly-controlled merchant vessels by the Dominion.

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