

NEW WESTMINSTER BOARD OF TRADE.

The annual meeting of the Board of Trade for New Westminster took place on the 8th inst. Reports by the president and secretary showed that prospects for the board during the coming year were cheering in every respect. The president was particularly optimistic in his views. With regard to the vexed question of halibut-fishing by Americans, he thought things might be worse than they actually are. He called attention to the fact that the United States were the chief consumers of the fish at present, and that as things stand now, Canada nets the proceeds arising from the customs duty on the fish, the outfitting of the fishing vessels, and the freight on the fish which are taken east on Canadian lines. The president exhorted all the members of the board to do all in their power to help along the Dominion Fair, and make it a success. He detailed a number of industries that intend to locate in the city in the course of the year.

The speech concluded with a plea for a duty on lumber imported from the United States. Statistics were given showing the amount of lumber used in Winnipeg in the past year, and it is stated that the greater part of this lumber had come across the border. It was demonstrated that had this lumber been the product of British Columbia mills it would have meant thousands of dollars for the Province, which has instead gone over into the American side. The same thing, he declared, is going on all over Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. Other speakers were less favorably disposed towards the present state of the halibut fisheries.

Mr. J. D. Taylor called attention to the fact that New Westminster had lately been losing her old-time importance as a centre of the canning industry owing to the policy of the Cannery Association of allowing several of their establishments to remain idle. The election of officers resulted as follows: President, Mr. William Mathers; vice-president, Mr. D. S. Curtis; secretary, Mr. A. E. White. Executive Council—Messrs. T. J. Trapp, F. R. Glover, A. E. Rand, H. G. Brymner, C. G. Major, F. J. Hart, T. S. Annandale, L. A. Lewis, Judge Bole, D. S. Curtis, H. Ryall, W. R. Gilley, Dr. H. A. Holmes, J. W. Creighton, M. Sinclair, and J. Cunningham.



OUR AUSTRALIAN LETTER.

New South Wales seems destined to disasters. The dry weather cut short the harvest, but on the last day of the old year there set in what is termed a heat wave. This is a correct expression for Sydney, where it lasted only one day; but in the country and as far south as Melbourne it lasted for a week, day and night. The thermometer went up in places to 124°, and a wind like the African sirocco blew, blasting any green stuff like a furnace flame. There followed the usual bush fires, severe in Victoria, but infinitely worse in this State, where it swept away standing grain and grass, which was the reserve for the stock during the hot season. Fences and buildings were destroyed, and much stock and some lives were lost. Though the loss is not so great as at first reported, it is bad enough, and subscriptions have been opened for needed relief. The Government is also doing well in this respect. The fires for the present are over, and may not recur again.

The wheelers in the coal mines of the Newcastle and Maitland districts have flouted the Arbitration Act and struck. They are only about three hundred in number, but they have thrown about four thousand men out of work. The Government is prosecuting some of the strikers, but in a fashion that does not give much hope of good effect. The most serious thing about the matter is not the direct loss, though that is not inconsiderable, but that it is another blow at the Arbitration Act, and to the confidence of investors in the industrial and commercial stability of the State. The Arbitration Act is more than ever regarded as a machine for oppressing employers, and without giving corresponding benefits to the worker.

These things have not tended to make trade brighter.

The fires will create a demand for some merchandise,

but it will be mainly for the articles that Canada cannot supply—wire, barbed and plain, for fencing, and corrugated iron. In the rural districts the timber for rebuilding will be locally supplied.

It is somewhat better in the other States, where the harvest has been more liberal and the calamities fewer.

The bank clearings for 1904 were below those for 1903 in Sydney, but higher in Melbourne. This is an indication of the relative states of business of the two cities. An incident in the same direction is that a Sydney bank has had to reduce its dividends from four to two and a half per cent. through unexpected losses in this city. It is relatively a small concern, but it is an indication.

There is nothing in the statistics of the volume of trade that shows that it should be poor, but it is attributable to the keen competition and reduction of profits.

The Australian Government, Federal and State, have got the Canadian bee in their bonnets, and think they can secure Canadian prosperity by advertising Australia. The Premier of this State has taken up the matter actively. They have got the notion somehow that Australia is not known in Britain, not too favorably known may be accepted as true. Australia was discovered financially by London twenty years ago, when the promoters showered loans and advances upon Australia, and then its evil days began. Its boomsters fattened for a while, and its politicians found that the expenditure of loans easily gotten were the easiest method of keeping in power. The boomsters have been wiped out, but not so the loan-hungry politicians, though Victoria, in the beginning the worst sinner, has straightened them up for a time. The English people, therefore, know Australia through vanished millions and diminished dividends. They unluckily know it, too, by the legislation, as well as by the financing of both the Commonwealth and State Parliaments. Then, too, how does this State expect to compete against America when the best it can offer is land with a low rainfall at £3 per acre, weighted with curious residential conditions as against the free grants of Canada, where crops are certain. It is much easier to advertise than it is to take the bull by the horns—that is the real cause of the backwardness of Australia, impossible socialism.

Canadian trade here does not show much improvement, and Canadians are not pushing it. Enquiries reach the agents here and in Melbourne, but if Australian firms are got to take up the offered lines the probabilities are that the Canadian manufacturer will discover that he cannot give attention to it just then, and he forgets to tell his Australian correspondent so. Canada seems to have the goods to sell, but not many of the makers seem inclined to undergo the cost of getting their articles known. The other day I met a commission agent who was regularly taking orders for Canadian goods, for which another firm was the authorized agent. He told me he had no trouble in getting his orders promptly filled, but he took good care not to approach the manufacturer directly. He used London and New York agents, who offered spot cash if the orders were promptly shipped. Not only were the orders quickly filled, but he secured lower prices than the appointed agent could quote. The authorized agent, too, says he cannot get shipments under six months. There will be trouble some day between principal and agent. Such orders go forward only where the goods have been made so well known as to be in demand. And, as I have said, there is the rub, for it involves money.

F. W.

Sydney, N.S.W., 24th January, 1905.



LA CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE, MONTREAL.

This active body continues to give attention to a wide variety of subjects. Its newly-elected council held its first meeting last week, when the various committees for the coming year were appointed. Seventeen different committees were formed, the chairmen being as follows: Municipal, Mr. J. R. Savignac; Agriculture and Colonization, Mr. Damase Parizeau; Reports, Mr. J. Contant; Special Investigations, Hon. F. L. Beique; Finance, Mr. I. Prefontaine; Groceries and Liquors, Mr. Euclide Mathieu; Hardware, Mr. A. Jeannotte; Manufactures, Mr. A. V. Roy; Legislation, Hon.