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Provincial Legislation and British Columbia

Important Bearing of Newly Created Law on Our Prosperity—Dangers of Paternalism in Legislation—Necessity for Increase of Private Initiative and Enterprise.

In this Pacific Coast of the Dominion of Canada, the intimate connection of the Provincial Government with the business of the Province was never more marked than in the session which closed with the month of May. When in December last the present Premier, the Hon. W. J. Bowser, became leader of the Government, he issued a pronouncement promising the people of British Columbia a business administration, and, true to his word, the legislative programme and the legislation enacted had chiefly to do with business.

One of the first pieces of work that was undertaken was to give effect to the Agricultural Credit Act, passed at the 1915 session, by borrowing \$1,000,000 for the purpose of making a loan to farmers for extensions or improvements to their present farms, and to assist men to make a start in agriculture where otherwise their capital would be insufficient, or, because of lack of necessary capital, their unaided efforts would not be sufficient to insure success. The proceeds of this loan are now available, and this money should be working on the problem of correcting an adverse trade balance in this Province in the matter of food products before the year is out.

The Shipping Aid Bill is the answer of the Government to the problem of finding bottoms to carry our products—chiefly lumber—overseas. This measure has been attacked on various grounds, and appears to have met the wishes of few. Practically every shipping man in the Province says that either it will not work at all, or else fail in its operation of solving the problem. The lumber interests are not friendly to it, since it offers no inducements to them to ship lumber foreign that is not enjoyed by their American competitors, with whom our mill operators say they cannot compete on even terms. Despite these objections, three wooden lumber carriers and one steel ship have been contracted for at a Vancouver shipyard, and other contracts are stated to be in prospect—all to be built and operated under the terms of the Shipping Act. The only notable amendment passed to the present bill was

to increase the number of vessels that could be built by Government aid from twenty to twenty-five. As a necessary fillip to start something in the way of shipbuilding and operation, it must be classed as a success. One member of the Legislature stated that if by the use of Government credit some reasonable start could be made toward the creation of a merchant marine and help immediately toward relieving the distressing shortage of tonnage available to our ports, it was all that was intended in the Act. Experience gathered from its operation would pave the way toward comprehensive and permanent legislation for a Provincial merchant marine. The boldness of this legislation is to be admired, inasmuch as it attacks a problem the solution of which has baffled every state or nation that has attempted it.

The Workmen's Compensation Act, which was laid on the table last year, with the promise of enactment this year, has duly become law. It was probably inspired by labor demands and those of the small manufacturer, and appears to have gained some impetus from the fact that so many of the states and provinces of North America had passed similar legislation. In other words, it was fashionable. That some legislation on workmen's compensation was necessary is certain; but that the Government should go to the extent of undertaking the entire business of workmen's compensation, to the exclusion of those already in the field, is an unwarranted action of paternalism in the domain of democratic government. It is a curious commentary on this legislation that in Europe, where this legisla-

tion has been longest in vogue, the monopolistic feature is being rapidly undermined, and private companies are being permitted to compete along with the Government insurance funds. Workmen's compensation legislation is in sight of the time when the field will be left alone to companies doing this class of business under State regulation, and amendments carrying this idea into effect will likely be passed by the Provincial Government before many years are out. But with the trend of events marking themselves in this direction, it seems a strange twist to drive the companies doing this class of business out of the Province, and then be compelled at a later date to invite them to return.

The Government has enacted a loan bill calling for the borrowing of \$10,000,000. The proceeds of this loan are to

A National Thrift Campaign.

There are many evidences that the public are not co-operating as fully as hoped with the efforts of the Government to encourage thrift. Large quantities of merchandise are being brought into the country that cannot be classed as necessary, as evidenced by the importation of artificial flowers to the value of \$433,771 during the eleven months ending February last, as much as during the preceding twelve months. Automobiles, musical instruments, fancy silks and soaps are being imported on as large a scale as ever. Such a demand for non-essentials could not exist if the public were seized of the seriousness of the existing situation and of the necessity for husbanding our resources to the last penny. Lives have been and are being freely offered in the cause of the Empire, and while this splendid voluntarism continues it remains for all who are debarred by sex, by age or by circumstances of any kind from making the supreme sacrifice, to husband the power to resist the enemy by thrift of every description, and it is the duty not alone of the Government, but also of the business leaders of the nation, to see to it that their influence is exerted in every possible way to foster thrift, in order that the savings thereby effected may be placed at the disposal of the nation.

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