

Report of Provincial Forest Branch for 1915

Work of Department in Extending Deep Sea Shipments and Domestic Consumption of British Columbia Lumber Products—Production, Value, Timber Scaled and Species Cut in 1915.

The report of the Forest Branch of the Province of British Columbia is always an interesting document and well worth the careful survey of anyone interested in the great natural resources of this Province. The report for 1915 is especially interesting, because the work of the department has been more particularly directed toward the problem of market extensions.

Some investigation into the reasons for the lack of progress in British Columbia's export lumber trade for the past fifteen years had been made during 1914. Early in the present year the need of extending this investigation to the overseas markets was brought to the attention of the Dominion Department of Trade and Commerce, and, in March, H. R. MacMillan, Chief Forester of the Province, was appointed by Sir George Foster to visit these markets as Special Trade Commissioner.

Mr. MacMillan, on reaching the United Kingdom, found that while the lack of shipping was becoming acute, American interests were very strongly represented in the British timber trade, while British Columbia mills were not. So little was the existence of a lumbering industry in this Province recognized by English buyers, that the Imperial Government itself, through the War Office and other large departments, was, as a matter of course, purchasing much Pacific Coast timber through American agents. As the export lumber trade of the Coast was centred in the hands of brokers in San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, the arrangement was highly unfavorable to the British Columbia industry. With the assistance of Sir Richard McBride, then in London, considerable headway was made, and it was subsequently announced that Imperial purchases of Pacific Coast timber would be restricted to British Columbia mills and that orders would be placed through the Provincial Government. The result was that a number of cargoes was placed through the Forest Branch amounting to \$206,000, and other cargoes placed as a result of representations of the Department. This promising line of business was nipped in the bud by the disastrous slide in the Panama Canal.

Mr. MacMillan has reported on conditions in the United Kingdom, France, Holland, and South Africa. Some time during the ensuing year he will report on India, New Zealand, Australia, China, and Japan, after a personal investigation. To maintain the good work initiated by Mr. MacMillan, the Provincial Government has dispatched a business representative of the industry to London, who will be permanently established there.

Permanent exhibits of British Columbia lumber and other forest products have been sent to Canadian Trade Commissioners at London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Glasgow, Paris, Shanghai, Yokohama, Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Buenos Ayres. Other exhibits were sent to Department of Trade and Commerce, Ottawa; the Industrial Bureau, Winnipeg, and Toronto. The exhibit at Toronto was awarded a gold medal.

While British Columbia by reason of location and export facilities must make every effort to secure its full share of the export lumber trade, the main market for its products are on this continent. In proportion to population Canada uses more lumber than any other country, and despite the fact that, with the exception of the Prairie region, the Dominion is essentially a forest country, the timbered areas of Eastern Canada are already unable to supply the local demand. Both Eastern Canada and the Prairie Provinces have in the past imported hundreds of millions of feet of

rough lumber from the United States. The forest products of British Columbia are equal or superior to those imported, and it is felt that a determined effort should be made to hold this domestic market for home products. Representatives of the Forest Branch have been stationed at Toronto and Regina to protect the interests of British Columbia in the lumber markets of Eastern Canada and the Prairie Provinces.

No section of the commercial service which is being established in the markets for British Columbia is of greater importance than the office recently opened at Regina. The largest market for British Columbia lumber will always be in the neighboring Prairie Provinces, which consume at least 60 per cent. of our total production. It was the shrinkage in the Prairie demand, combined with the heavy fall in lumber prices and the decrease in consumption in British Columbia itself, which brought about depression in the industry of this Province. With town and city building operations in the West at a standstill for the time being, and with the existing programme of railroad construction more or less completed, the difficult problem of how to increase the consumption of lumber in the Province has been pressing for solution.

Investigation of the lumber consumption on the Prairies brought out very strongly, among other things, the fact that on the average farm the buildings have not by any means kept pace with crop production. There exists a great need for all manner of farm buildings, and particularly for implement sheds, granaries, and barns for live stock; and this need will continue and increase for many years. Nearly every farm is without some building essential to really efficient and profitable farming.

Wood is the best material for farm buildings, and British Columbia has the best building woods, and plenty of them. It was felt that, with such a plain case of demand and supply, there should be a splendid opportunity to encourage the use of our woods and at the same time give real service to the consumer. The question was how to accomplish these objects in the most effective way. It has been done by linking up the work with the great "better-farming" movement which is being carried on by Government agricultural organizations all over Canada and the United States.

The better-farming movement is really a campaign to promote mixed farming. Incidentally, it also promotes the use of building materials, because mixed farming requires more buildings than the mere growing of grain. For this reason one of the main features of the movement has been the supplying of information to farmers concerning the proper planning and construction of farm buildings. Altogether it is difficult to exaggerate the effect of this work in improving the design of farm buildings, increasing their number, and also very largely in determining the kind of building material used.

With the co-operation of the University of Saskatchewan, a complete and comprehensive system of ten bulletins, covering practically the whole range of farm buildings, were issued and distributed.

In the aggregate the departments of the Dominion and Provincial Governments and the larger cities are purchasers of lumber on a very large scale. Railway construction, harbor improvements, and other public works consume considerable quantities of heavy timber. Then there are immense quantities of lumber used in general building work.

Besides this large market in Eastern Canada for dimension lumber, there is a very extensive demand for moderate priced wood for interior finish. From the earliest times the Eastern lumber market has been supplied by Ontario white or Norway pine, and in recent years to a large extent by imported southern pine.