

British Columbia Shipbuilding Industry

Need to press for continued orders and extension of the industry, and necessity to devise ways and means of establishing a steel industry.

The "War Nootka," which was launched on Monday, and the "Alaska," the first large steel vessel to be launched in British Columbia, which will occur this morning, with two other vessels which were launched during the past few weeks at Victoria, have enforced upon the attention of the business interests of British Columbia the fact that the shipbuilding industry in this province has finally arrived. We now have a shipbuilding industry established, and it is of supreme importance to the business of British Columbia that this industry should be kept going to full capacity during the progress of the war and that ways and means should be inquired into and ultimately provided for, looking to the permanent establishment of this industry in our coastal waters.

When one takes the view of what the industry was prior to the war and what is its present extension and future possibilities, it will be seen that great changes have occurred. Prior to the outbreak of war, shipyards were engaged in repair work only, or in the building of an occasional tugboat or wooden sailing vessel and pleasure craft. The progress of the war soon made the shortage of tonnage evident. The late government embarked on a program of construction of wooden sailing vessels with power auxiliary, and under this program twelve vessels were built. The evident intention of the Act was to provide available tonnage for the taking of British Columbia lumber to the markets of the world, but when one of these vessels left a British Columbia port loaded with lumber, her master was instructed to await Admiralty orders at his port of destination, so that very seldom have any of them made a second appearance for reloading lumber at British Columbia ports for the deep sea trade.

The next development was in steel. Norwegian interests, which had suffered most in the submarine warfare, amongst the neutrals, and who are essentially seafaring people, were quick to see the necessity for an extensive program of shipbuilding. These interests consequently

placed orders among the shipyards of the Atlantic coast and those of Puget Sound of the United States. The inception of the steel shipbuilding industry in the province was started by the negotiation of Messrs. J. Coughlan & Sons, steel fabricators of Vancouver, with these Norwegian interests for the building of the standard 8,800 ton steel vessels in Vancouver. The anxiety of the Norwegian interests coupled with the enterprise of this firm, quickly

overcame all the obstacles and soon a contract was signed for the construction of one vessel. The ability of this firm to perform its contract impressed itself upon the Norwegian owners and other contracts were let involving a much more extensive program.

When, however, a large number of these orders had been placed in both the United States and Canada, British shipping interests awoke to the situation and immediately placed orders among all the shipbuilding yards of the United States and practically bought out their capacity. Subsequently the Imperial Munitions Board took a hand in the scramble for ships, placed orders for a large quantity of tonnage and embarked in Canada on a wooden shipbuilding program which has had a great influence on the industry in British Columbia. They have to date, placed 27 orders among yards in British Columbia and placed further orders with J. Coughlan & Sons for steel ships and acting under the power of the government, have taken over all contracts of this firm with Norwegian interests, except the

"Alaska." Now the Dominion Government is taking a hand in the building of ships and press dispatches announce that great efforts will be made to turn out tonnage in Canada. At present, no definite information is available as to the plans or extent of this proposed development.

The wooden shipbuilding industry is at present in a hesitant mood. Ship orders that were placed by the Imperial Munitions Board are rapidly being completed; yet for the moment, no new orders are available. It is understood that French interests have sought to place orders for sailing ships with power auxiliary, but these interests have not been able to contract with British Columbia shipyards for the reason that the Imperial Munitions Board will not

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