

## FINANCIAL TIMES

*A Journal of Finance, Commerce, Insurance, Real Estate, Timber and Mining*

Vol. III. No. 9

VANCOUVER, MAY 6, 1916

SINGLE COPY 10c  
THE YEAR \$2.00

## Trade Status and Prospects in British Columbia

**Improvement in Basic Industries is Marked and General Commercial Lines Are on Sound Basis—Mortgage Situation Still Unsatisfactory—Shortage of Labor Imminent.**

The financial and commercial situation in British Columbia, although subject to cross eddies and new conditions of an unfavorable nature, is improved over what it was six months ago and the trend continues toward expansion.

The unsatisfactory features are still with us. The war is the heaviest drag on industry. In the East considerable transient prosperity has been induced by the war, yet in British Columbia it has favorably affected trade but little. The uncertainties of the economic outcome are keeping back development, while the toll of war on our population and wealth is daily becoming more evident. The lack of overseas or foreign capital for our development is still being felt, the lack of immigration, the loss of our best manhood going to the front, the operation of a moratorium on land, the impeding of deep sea commerce due to high charters, are all brakes on the pronounced tendency to expand in commerce and industry.

But the great basic industries of the Province are in sound conditions and their increased activities are gradually breaking through the inertia and depression which set in a year before war commenced.

Naturally the huge demand for metals used in the manufacture of munitions is proving a powerful stimulant to mining production. Refined copper at thirty cents per pound, when the average normal rate in the past has been fourteen cents per pound, is enlarging the production of those mines already developed and is also bringing into the shipping stage many mines that could not have operated at a profit or were not sufficiently advanced toward the producing stage to operate at a profit under normal conditions. The Anyox and Grand Forks plants of the Granby Company, the Britannia mine and the Consolidated plant at Trail are monthly breaking records in the production of the red metal, and the adverse conditions which have surrounded the Greenwood smelter are gradually being cleared away with the prospect that it will be in full operation during the coming summer. These large undertakings and the smaller

shipping mines give promise of a copper production in 1916 of one hundred million pounds. The heavy advance in lead and zinc metals has been responsible for a very large increase in lead and zinc ores. What has restored the production of zinc ore has been the difficulty in refining in the Province. The refinery built at Trail is helping to solve this problem and the Dominion Government is bonusing the industry. The low price of silver has also affected the output of lead and zinc ores. With bar silver now at thirty-

seven pence per ounce, the highest price in several decades, all three metals should make a record production. The gold output, it is expected, will not be greatly augmented during the year. Coal production, however, is on a fair way to recovery and the making of coke for smelting purposes will undoubtedly be heavily increased this year. Prospecting has been adversely affected by the war, due to such large numbers of prospectors volunteering. The stress is laid on bringing prospects to the shipping stage and increasing the output of developed mines.

The present position and the outlook for mining is the brightest of any industry in the Province, and altogether this year promises to be the banner year in mining in the Province.

The lumber industry, while not enjoying the prosperity of the mining industry, is greatly improved over six months ago. The export trade, however, cannot be expected to develop much over last year in view of the shipping situation. The charter market almost prevents exportation of lumber.

The Government programme to solve the problem, even if put into immediate operation, can have practically no bearing this year. The improvement in the lumber trade is wholly confined to the prairies and Eastern Canada. The cause is the bumper crop of last year requiring much needed building of outhouses, barns, granaries, toolsheds, etc. For the present there can be little expected in the way of urban building, since most of the local centres are overbuilt and the population has not increased, if it has not decreased due to the war. What has helped the industry in this Province is the fact that American competition on the prairies is much less severe than usual. The prosperity of the States has increased lumber consumption, and the consequence is that most of the American Northwest mills are busy on their own orders.

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