

BUILDING NEEDED—

# Real Estate High— Good Houses Scarce

House construction always has been a major problem in Prince Rupert, builders say. The contour of the townsite itself presents the initial difficulty because few level stretches of land appear around the rock-bound harbor.

And where the topography is comparatively level, muskeg-type of soil has made substantial building as costly as where building sites had to be literally chipped out of rock.

New building has been scarce in Prince Rupert, especially as concerns housing. Apart from some 600 "war-time" housing units, purchased privately from War Assets Corporation after cessation of hostilities, most permanent dwellings are between 20 to 35 years old. These houses, engineers point out, however, were for the most part well constructed with first class material of that day, and most of them still appear in good condition.

At present there is a crying need for extra housing in this city, as explained by the city council and Chamber of Commerce, who for the past two years have endeavored to get started a joint provincial-Dominion housing project here.

With the coming of Columbia Cellulose Company and the fishing industry expanding, the city is faced with an immediate demand for at least 100 dwelling units, they say.

Part of this demand is expected to be filled when a 50-unit apartment block is converted from a former American Army administration building.

Another small need may be filled by private building under the National Housing Act, but building is costly and loans allotment for Prince Rupert are only ten a year. Contractors say construction costs range from \$9 to \$12 a square foot, depending on building site, not including basements.

In most new housing construction anticipated in this area a move to eliminate basements, will considerably reduce cost of rock blasting or a large-scale system of drainage, excavation

and building-up in muskeg or floating-soil areas.

### VALUES CLIMB

With houses at a premium in Prince Rupert, real estate values have climbed steadily. Although house prices are perhaps not much higher here than in comparative cities, realtors believe actual value of homes is not in line with prices asked. Homes listed for sale demand an average high cash payment which makes it difficult to "turn over" property, they say.

On the other hand, four and six-room war-time units, originally purchased from war assets for prices ranging from \$600 to \$1800, are now selling steadily for \$3,000 to \$6,000. Although these homes were not built originally on a permanent basis, their architecture is more modern than the average "old home" which with the lower purchase price is an attraction.

Older homes, two and three bedroom type with basements, demand anywhere from \$5,500 to \$9,000, with average down payments of \$3,500.

## Population is Nearing 11,000

Prince Rupert's population is estimated today at close to, if not exceeding, 11,000. In 1946 it was placed at 8,200 on the basis of ration cards but has been steadily increasing since then. Only lack of housing keeps it back as opportunities for employment and business establishments attract people to the community. The last decennial census in 1941 showed the population as 6,714.

# Ship- Building

One of the major facilities of Prince Rupert, its drydock and shipyard established by Canadian National Railways 40 years ago, lies comparatively idle.

The two-berthed yard early found a place in the shipping economy of the west coast, but it played its most prominent role during World War II. During its busiest period, approximately 2,000 workers were employed. Thirteen 10,000-ton freighters, four navy minesweepers and two 1,350-ton China Coast type freighters were built between 1939 and 1945.

Besides, 914 ships were dry-docked and repaired and some 2,500 vessels not dry-docked, repaired. The plant is equipped to do all its own steel fabricating and major machining.

With the eyes of industry slowly turning to the north, business points a finger at the shipyard to show another avenue of development.

## North Has Long Days

Reading by natural light as late as 10:30 p.m. is possible in Prince Rupert during the months of June and July. Actually, during the height of summer, there are only a few hours in 24 of complete darkness.

Example, June 24, sun sets behind Metlakatla, across the bay, at 9:20 p.m., rising again over Mt. Oldfield at 4 a.m.

Not only do these long hours of daylight save the housekeeper's electric light bill, but fishermen during the peak of the salmon season can keep on fishing practically around the clock—and most of them do.

Bauxite occurs in most countries of the world with the tendency toward tropical or semi-tropical districts.

The 1951 census, now being organized, should show it nearly double that figure.

## B.C. Aluminum

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as well as a road connecting with the Skeena highway. This would make Terrace a divisional point in traffic of huge proportions. No wonder then, that talk of expansion is heavy in Terrace, and that it hopes to play a major role in the growth of the new city.

Prince Rupert, third major port in B.C. and also due to play a much greater part in the economy of the province, is throbbing with an undercurrent of speculation and expansion fever. Most local businessmen have no doubt that ramifications of the large industry 80 miles south will have its effect here but just how much, or how little?

As soon as rumors of the aluminum development became more than talk, a Prince Rupert syndicate sought out a lone homesteader of the Kitimat area. They found Rudolph Braun, who had pre-empted in 1910, 40 acres near the shores of Minette Bay, a bulge in the fjord of Kitimat Arm. Later, Braun bought another 40-acre lot. In 1939 the pioneer was burned out of his home and he came to Prince Rupert. The syndicate offered Braun \$12,000 for his eighty acres which he took without many questions.

But the big question the syndicate would like answered, is: "Will the townsite be built around our property?" They think it's likely.

Among those who feel Prince Rupert will definitely benefit by the coming of the aluminum era this far north in B.C. is Mayor G. W. Rudderham. With many other pioneers, he has tried to lure shipping to this port, ranked as the world's third best, ice-free all year round and with one of the easiest approaches found anywhere. The mayor thinks shipping may finally be sparked through the aluminum venture. Ships, hauling bauxite to the Kitimat smelter, will look for other trade and outgoing cargoes, arriving via the northern trans-continental CNR line of which Prince Rupert is its terminus.

L. M. Feisenthal, prominent business man and president of Prince Rupert Chamber of Commerce, feels this way about the coming of Alcan:

"Prince Rupert can be the leading point for supplies, both in and outgoing.

"It is the beginning of this country and the big break we need in addition to the Columbia

Cellulose Company to get the ball rolling."

There is an interesting sidelight of the likely effects of Alcan's power development which has not received a great deal of publicity. The Fraser Valley is far removed from the vicinity of the Nechako dam or the aluminum smelter at Kitimat, but the notorious Fraser river which runs through the backbone of B.C.'s agriculture, has a large portion of its headwaters fed directly to it by the Nechako. Millions of dollars of damage were caused in the past to farming, stock and property in this fertile valley due to spring flooding. With a fast spring runoff, overflow of the Fraser always has been a threat.

Is it not practical to assume that once a large portion of its headwaters are dammed, danger of the Fraser flooding will be entirely eliminated?

For a while, not long after the world heard of the new aluminum development, the plan was attacked from many angles. United States Congressmen called it "a great mistake," others termed it a "dead duck," and Alaska branded Alcan's plans a "double-cross." The U.S. wanted the

plant on its own soil, and an investigating committee was set up by Congress to find out how much U.S. capital would be involved in the project.

"None," said Mr. Powell, Alcan's president. "It's an all-Canadian deal."

United States needs aluminum badly. It has said so, and has indicated that the U.S. will have to buy from Alcan to satisfy American demands of today. According to Alcan officials, "there is nothing to worry about," concerning new markets.

Before the entire project is completed, Alcan estimates it will require 200,000 tons of steel, 24,000 tons of aluminum and 4,000 tons of copper. Of the overall requirements in materials no more than five per cent would come from the United States. Cement and other construction materials would be available in Canada, as well as heavy electrical equipment, such as generators and transformers.

The Aluminum Era has begun in B.C. and is the greatest industrial development in the history of the province. Its government recognizes an assurance of industrial success for the North, while at Kitimat the sperm of industry already lies nestled in the womb of its resources.

Total payroll of Burns Lake area in forestry, trade and services was \$523,761 in 1947. With the coming of Alcan's development 1951 payroll is estimated at more than \$3,000,000.

Generation of heat centigrade is required manufacture of aluminum

Aluminum may be fed the stomach without ill

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