Vancouver's Taxation Problem

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Article I

The action of the ratepayers of Vancouver city in negativing all the bylaws submitted by the city council again raises in an acute form the whole problem of the city's taxation powers. Some very harsh criticism of the ratepayers has been made, and part of the criticism has shown no differentiation between the ratepayers and the inhabitants of the city.

It seems to me that one of the first considerations to be dealt with in seeking any light on this taxation problem is to fix clearly in our minds just what we mean when we say "Vancouver." If we mean by "Vancouver" this beautiful tract of land on Burrard Inlet and English Bay, with all its immense wealth—its situation as the Pacific terminal of two transcontinental railway systems—headquarters for the Australian, Japanese, Chinese and pan-Pacific trade, its industries, its shipbuilding, its workers in iron and brass, its workers in lumber and woods of all descriptions, its shops of goods, wares and merchandise, second to none, superior to many in the Dominion; its healthy, industrious people, more contented than most—in short, its busy industrial and commercial life, then Vancouver is a wealthy city, a large and populous city; a city of wonderful achievement and still more wonderful promise of inevitable growth. But if you mean by "Vancouver" the corporate entity, what have you?

You have a corporation worth $205,000,000, the assessed value of its land and improvements, with a fixed debt of $35,000,000, or 17 per cent., a floating debt of $6,000,000, or nearly three per cent., and this floating debt is increasing from year to year as the city endeavors to collect taxes from a source which cannot pay.

The city levied taxes of $3,775,595.64, and collected only $2,521,055.28, and went behind $1,254,540.36.