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The evident want of candor on the part of the Vancouver Harbour Commission and its chief spokesman, the Vancouver member in the Dominion House, has a strong tendency to vitiate the consideration of the proposed scheme of harbour improvement and fill the minds of the business and shipping interests of Vancouver with suspicions to which perhaps the Harbour Commissioners are not justly entitled.

After giving an understanding that nothing would be done without consulting the business interests of Vancouver who are vitally concerned in the matter, the Commissioners succeeded in passing an order-in-council, copy of which is in another page of this issue, giving authority for the borrowing of money, acquiring property, and otherwise proceeding on a huge scheme of harbour improvements without in the slightest consulting the wishes of the people of Vancouver. We understand that the assent of the Governor-General has not yet been given; but only that has prevented the Harbour Commissioners from committing the Port of Vancouver to the programme of these improvements.

Not only have the business and shipping interests not been consulted with regard to the scheme, but in the order-in-council the Chief Engineer of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, from evidence placed before him by the Harbour Commissioners, is made to state that, "The several railway companies, the Corporations of Vancouver and North Vancouver, business firms and private citizens are unanimously in favor of having the scheme carried through." Surely this is a palpable misstatement.

Despite the fact that Vancouver has not been consulted we are urged to accept the statements of the Harbour Commissioners and the Vancouver member at their face value and to refrain from asking too many questions for the reason that the delicate negotiations entered into by the Harbour Board would be upset by the publicity given to them at this time. It is actions such as these that are responsible for the widespread suspicion that all is not right with the proposed harbour improvements, nor with the Harbour Board.

It is alleged that the chairman of the Board is owner or part owner or in control of or interested in a piece of waterfrontage "east of the Great Northern docks," which it is proposed to purchase for harbour improvements. If this is so, is not the chairman acting in very bad taste by remaining a member of the Board? And can he legally dispose of the property to the Board? If this is true, can the people of Vancouver be wholly blamed for holding a sus-

picion that perhaps other properties may be proposed to be purchased with which some one in connection with the Board may have an interest.

It is for this reason that there is such a widespread clamor for a thorough and comprehensive investigation of the whys and wherefores of every phase of the proposed harbour improvements. The Merchants' Exchange of Vancouver have gone on record and have petitioned the Prime Minister to suspend the proposed scheme pending investigation. The Harbour and Navigation Committee of the Vancouver Board of Trade have recommended that if possible the Railway Commission, headed by Sir Henry Drayton, be secured for a complete investigation.

Not only, in our opinion, have the Harbour Commissioners acted with a lack of candor but their proposed plan shows the exercise of bad judgment on the financial side of the question at least.

Right here we are only too glad to commend the Harbour Commissioners and the Vancouver member for the evidence they give of having made a study of the port and terminal problem. They are also to be commended for having worked out such a concrete and comprehensive scheme of harbour improvements for the Port of Vancouver. They however act with very bad judgment in seeking to put into operation at this time the full scheme as given in the Order-in-Council.

Under the Order-in-Council authority is given to issue \$5,000,000 25-year 5% bonds and to acquire either with the proceeds of their sale or exchange terminal property at an estimated cost of \$3,320,294.75; \$200,000 is to be used to refund an outstanding issue of similar amount, leaving a balance of \$1,479,705.50 to provide for development of harbour properties and installation of terminal equipment. The fixed charges on this issue will be \$250,000. How will this \$250,000 be raised? The amount necessary to run the port must be much larger. Operating expenses will be a big item, not to mention sinking funds, depreciation, etc. Would \$500,000 pay the expenses of the Board? We think not. Yet assuming \$500,000 as the yearly port expenses, how is such a large amount of money to be raised out of the shipping of this port and the rentals of industrial sites? We have no light on this from the Harbour Board except the general statement that all improvements will be self-supporting.

The contention that the industrial sites provided in the scheme would be immediately availed of to erect factories is arrant nonsense. For any firm that wishes to establish an industry there is cheap land, with ample facilities, either on the waterfront or on the line of a railway available in large amounts or may be purchased for moderate amounts. The scheme to provide cheap industrial sites is commendable if for no other reason than that it would have a tendency to keep down rentals on privately owned land; but that these proposed industrial sites can be made to pay the fixed charges on the investment is wide of the mark. Unfortunately, too; there is little demand for industrial sites at the present time nor is there likely to be much until the Province becomes more settled. Industrial sites as a source of revenue is something for the long distant future.

The terminal railway scheme so far as it applies to the City of Vancouver seems to hold the most promise of revenue for the immediate future and it would have its advantages for railways that have not as yet terminals in this city. The docking plan would undoubtedly prove for a number of years a deal loss. With the Government dock and elevator available now for the tonnage using the port there is more than enough wharfage for all the shipping of this port for years ahead.

We venture the opinion that if the Port of Vancouver is to stand by itself and the present scheme is put into operation the port as a corporation will go into bankruptcy within two years from the time a commencement is made on these improvements.