

The Chronicle

Banking, Insurance & Finance.

ESTABLISHED JANUARY, 1851

R. WILSON-SMITH, Proprietor

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

Vol. XXIX. No 26.

MONTREAL, JUNE 25, 1909.

Single Copy - . 10c
Annual Subscription \$2.00

A KNIGHT UNDAUNTED. SIR ROBERT PERKS' armorial bearings should display "Nil Desperandum" as their motto. Abating not a whit of his cheerfulness, he has once more reached home with his canal plans in his pocket. Their being declined with thanks has not dampened his enthusiasm. Nor his perkiness—if this verbal atrocity from Ottawa will bear repetition. At worst he thinks only of postponement until some more convenient season. Even those who most question the advisability of the project cannot but admire the British pertinacity of the projector.

That there should be no present encouragement to Sir Robert's request for a Government interest-guarantee was a foregone conclusion. Public undertakings in plenty are on hand for the near future. Shouldering responsibility for a heavy additional liability—such as the Georgian Bay canal must involve by whomsoever constructed—is not just now to be entertained.

But a period of self-imposed restraint need not be one of barren idleness. With regard to future waterway developments this should afford a time for systematic enquiry and constructive thinking.

ALTERNATIVE WATERWAYS. JUST now the deepening and improving of existing Canadian canals is being persistently advocated. Naturally this advocacy is actuated in some quarters by purely local considerations. But the relative merits of the Georgian Bay or the Welland route must be weighed, for and by the Dominion as a whole.

A week ago this matter was discussed in Toronto by representatives of several important interests, including shippers and carriers. The plan reported upon by experts was for deepening and enlarging the Welland canal—quite apart from any similar improvements that might be made to the lower St. Lawrence system. With the locks on the Welland route reduced in number and as long and wide as the one on the Sault canal, the contemplated mode of transportation would be by large steamships from Duluth to Kingston or Prescott, and in suitable smaller craft from there to Montreal. Some who favour this project look upon it as only the beginning of a reconstruction of the entire route from the Upper Lakes to Montreal. And those, when referring to the Georgian Bay project, quote the old adage as to the longest way around being the shortest way home. They

maintain that, while the new route would be the shorter in mileage, the old waterway—deepened and enlarged—could be navigated in considerably less time, owing to its stretches of open water.

Those who rest their case after presenting reasons for enlarging the Welland canal alone, are of the opinion that large vessels would find it more profitable to make their trips to and from Prescott, rather than as far as Montreal, even though the St. Lawrence locks were enlarged. To which others retort that, if such be so, it is a question as to its being worth while enlarging even the Welland—for there are still those who keep consistently to the view that improvement of terminal and transshipment facilities should precede canal enlargement. These claim that transference of grain from large vessels to boats adapted for present canal use—or to railroad routes—is preferable to bringing lake vessels through miles of canals, however deep. Larger boats, they say would have difficulty in promptly securing return cargoes of package freight.

INLAND MARINE INSURANCE RATES.

THE matter of insurance rates cannot be overlooked in considering inland waterway development. There has been a somewhat general assumption that the Georgian Bay route would possess a decided advantage in this regard over the Welland and St. Lawrence canals—more particularly in the autumn, because of briefer exposure to the sweeping gales of the Great Lakes. It must not be forgotten, however, that a large vessel—especially when light—is seriously subject to damage, though not to total wreck, when traversing a canal route in stormy weather. But high winds are not the only considerations that make for increased navigation hazards in the autumn. Longer hours of darkness or semi-darkness bring increased dangers—and unless the lighting of the route were most thorough, navigation after the hours of daylight might be attended by greater risk in the land-locked Georgian Bay route than in the open waters of Lakes Erie and Ontario.

Canals and locks have their special hazards. The Sault accident has furnished recent proof. And minor losses are constantly caused by bumpings and mishaps in locks and narrow reaches. So considerable are these in the aggregate, that underwriters—despite protestings—have lately made them the basis of an increase in rates upon vessels passing through the Welland and St. Lawrence canals.