

## How to Get the Free Port

A ROYAL COMMISSION NEEDED TO INVESTIGATE THE SUBJECT.  
—QUESTION MUST BE REGARDED FROM NATIONAL POINT OF  
VIEW.—HOW THE FREE PORT WOULD AFFECT THE WESTERN  
FARMERS.—MARKETING THE WHEAT.—THE LOAD FACTOR IN  
THE SHIPPING PROBLEM.

If we are to have a South Shore Free Port it will have to be brought about by a combination of public and private effort, as the old Montreal "Harbor" has been. Private ownership of great ocean ports is not to be thought of today. They are the gateways of the countries to which they appertain, and when their shores fall into private ownership sooner or later, at any cost, they have to be redeemed for public use and control.

In Europe public ownership is the rule, London being the most notable exception and that only partially.

The first step necessary would seem to be to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate and report to the Governor-General in Council upon the feasibility of the project. The task for the Commission is not so Herculean as it looks at first sight. Regarding the general principal of free ports, there is little to be learned that cannot be learned without much expenditure of time, labor or money. We have the experience of many free ports to go upon, and some of them within the British Empire.

Gibraltar has an area of only two square miles and a population of only 19,120, but it is a free port and does a considerable shipping trade. In 1914, 4,247 vessels entered the port,

with a total tonnage of 6,323,658. People who have the notion that a free port is a port that is free from shipping dues (nobody on the South Shore believes that to-day), will be interested in knowing that Gibraltar's chief source of income is from shipping dues. Its imports in 1914 were \$4,130,000 and its exports \$120,000; but neither agriculturally nor industrially is it possible for Gibraltar to be productive. Its principal business is the coaling of steamers.

Hong Kong is another British free port. It is an island ten miles long by 2 to 8 1-2 miles broad, a total area of 32 square miles. The whole colony consisting of islands with an area of 390 square miles, has a population of 561,304, of whom 480,544 are Chinese.

In 1914 the shipping entering the port had a tonnage of 18,378,476 tons. The colony does a big trade in sugar, opium, flour, oil, amber, cotton, ivory, betel, sandalwood, rice, tea, woollens, silks, and salt. It has a trade imports and exports of \$250,000,000 a year.

The British Free Port of Singapore is one of the greatest ports in the world. There were 11,943 ships cleared at this port in 1914 and the total for the whole colony was 19,536 ships with a tonnage of 24,859,517. (exclusive of native craft).