

THE CHANNEL TO QUEBEC AND HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS.

As this subject is a matter of great importance, not only to the merchants of Montreal, but also to the citizens generally, it is well that the remarks of Mr. Young, the present chairman of the Harbour Commissioners, and one of the representatives of the Board of Trade, in moving his important resolutions as to the deepening of the channel between this city and Quebec, and the increased accommodation in the harbour, should be fairly understood. Our report of the proceedings of the last meeting of the Harbour Commissioners was very much condensed, and as we agree with Mr. Young that his reasons should be given for urging the changes he wishes to effect, we are glad to give an extended report of his remarks:—

Mr. Young said, in moving the resolutions, that as Chairman of the Trust, and as one of the representatives of the Board of Trade, he thought that the time had come when some comprehensive plan for harbour improvement should be adapted to correspond with the proposed channel of 25 feet between Quebec and Montreal. No doubt there would be differences of opinion on such a subject, but he thought that whatever tended to promote the general interest of the country, or of the city, would best promote the interest of all sections of it, and, therefore, he hoped that to the discussion of these resolutions now offered, that no sectional feelings would be allowed to interfere with what might be the general public interest. The resolutions not only embraced the policy of the enlargement of the harbour, but also referred to the deepening of the channel between Quebec and this city. He thought it might be interesting to some members of the Board, younger than himself, to state that from 1832 up to 1841 the mercantile men of Montreal were persistent in urging on the Government the public necessity of improving the navigation from the sea to the Port of Montreal. In 1844 the Government yielded to the suggestions, and the work was begun by the Public Works, (contrary, however, to the opinion of an eminent engineer, Mr. Atherton, who had been employed on the Clyde works,) and after expending nearly \$400,000 in attempting to make a straight channel through Lake St. Peter, instead of following the natural but more crooked channel, the work was abandoned, after investigation, without any advantage being gained to the trade. In 1851 an act was passed authorizing the Harbour Commissioners to undertake the channel improvements. This they did in June in 1851, and in November of the same year a channel was cut of 75 feet wide and 2 feet deeper for four miles, and a ship, the "City of Manchester," was taken from Montreal to Quebec, drawing 14 feet, when there was 12 feet on the flats. On the 24th of August, 1853, the ship "California" was loaded down to 16 feet, when there was 12 feet in the flats, and passed from Montreal to Quebec without difficulty, and the channel was increased in width to 250 feet. This remarkable success induced the Commissioners to consider the possibility of increasing the depth to 20 feet. Surveys showed this was possible, but expensive, and after a reference of the subject to the merchants and citizens generally, the Harbour Commissioners were urged to go on with trying to obtain a channel from sea to 20 feet. In October, 1859, the work had so far progressed that the ship "Hedge of Canada" was loaded down to 18 feet, when there was 11 feet on the flats, and passed through to Quebec without touching bottom. In 1865 the channel was so improved that in November of that year the ship "Ocean Queen" was loaded at Sorel to 20 feet 2 inches, and passed down to Quebec while there was 11 feet on the

flats, but after this feat had been made evident, the then Commissioners were deprived of their commissions, as well as their superintendence of works, [Captain Armstrong.] The channel now is as it existed in November, 1865, and has not been completed, lighted or buoyed as was intended. Such is a brief history of deepening the river between Quebec and Montreal. The effect of the improvement in trade has been remarkable. Before the improvement, vessels of only 200 tons were engaged in the trade. As the channel was deepened larger ships were employed, until steamers with the present depth, at low water, of 20 feet, ascend from sea of 3,500 tons. Taking all classes of sea vessels, the average tonnage before the improvement was 257 tons. The average in 1861 was 450 tons, while this average in 1873 was 587 tons. This increase of the size of the vessels trading to Montreal and avoiding lighterage lessened the cost of freight. In a table prepared and published in a letter to the late Mr. Lemieux, in 1856, it was shown that the rates of freight in nine years ending with 1854, were 100 per cent. higher from Montreal to Liverpool than from New York; while for the nine years ending with 1855, the rates of freight from Montreal to Liverpool, under the improved system of navigation, declined 42 per cent. As a matter of fact, it is found more economical to use a large ship than a small one, and steamers are now in use in the trade of New York of 5,000 tons, and if trade by the St. Lawrence is to keep pace with New York, the navigation from sea to Montreal must be deepened for such vessels. He believed that if this is done, and other facilities created, a similar reduction in freight will follow such improvement in the same way as has resulted from improving the channel from 11 to 20 feet at low water. Only a small part of the interior trade yet passes through the St. Lawrence—not more than 14 per cent; still, it is rapidly on the increase, as will be evident from these figures. The tonnage of inland craft which paid harbour dues in 1861 was 533,224; and in 1873 the number had increased from 5,217 to 6,751, with a tonnage of 933,492. The number and tonnage of sea-going ships coming to Montreal was

In 1834.....	253	70,910 tons.
1864.....	378	161,310 "
1874.....	72	412,478 "

The revenue of the harbour was

In 1851.....	\$3,530
1854.....	104,207
1873.....	248,454

and in 1874 it is estimated at \$275,000. This rapid increase of trade demands the most serious consideration. It is not going to stop. The rapid growth of the interior, both in Canada and the Western States, will be still greater in the future than in the past, and as he [Mr. Young] believed that Montreal was a natural depot for this commerce. A heavy responsibility rested on the Commissioners in providing ample and large facilities for this ever increasing trade. To do this effectually the whole matter must be considered, not only the deepening of the channel from Quebec to Montreal, but the improvement of the harbour, on a scale commensurate with such a navigation. At present the plan is to deepen the river to 25 feet, out of the revenue of the harbour. That is, the Government furnish the money, but the Harbour Trust pay the annual interest at five per cent. To deepen the channel to 22 feet will cost \$1,500,000, and to deepen it to 25 feet, will cost over \$3,000,000, which, at 5 per cent will be \$150,000 per annum. The annual interest now payable on the harbour improvements is \$23,000, and if \$150,000 be added thereto, the whole revenue of the harbour will be absorbed, and nothing left to improve the harbour and increase facilities there in. Now, the expense of deepening of Lake St. Peter, and other parts of the river, should not be a burden on harbour revenues as it is not a local work. It is a public work as much as any of the canals,

and it has always been so considered. It was begun by Government as a public work, and although the Harbour Commissioners carried on the work for a time, yet in 1861 the Government assumed the debt, and in 1864 an act was passed declaring that the works between the harbours of Quebec and Montreal shall be considered "as if built with public Province works," and so they are. The owners of ships in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, or Prince Edward Island, are equally interested, with other parts of the Dominion, in having this channel made available for the largest class of vessels, and as the effect is to reduce freight, every farmer, also, in the interior, is interested. But unless the harbour of Montreal is improved and facilities created in it, of the same depth of water, and on the same scale, the deepened channel will be useless, for there is no place in the present harbour where a ship drawing 25 feet could find a berth. This is an important fact and must be intelligently considered. For, in his opinion, if not considered and means provided for the 25 foot ship the trade of the interior cannot be retained by Montreal. As far back as 1850 he (Mr. Young) saw the importance of this, and when then acting as a Harbour Commissioner, moved the submission of the question how this was to be done to Messrs. T. C. K. and G. S. Gowik, Civil Engineers, with instructions to see whether a branch of the Lacine Canal could not be carried down Crag or other straits to Hochelaga. The report of the gentlemen was, that the cost of this by the purchase of buildings and land, on the route would be so great as to put it out of the question, but they advised the improvement of the shoals opposite the city, the cutting of a new channel outside, and the construction of a dock on the Point St. Charles shoals. Since then the Victoria Bridge has been built, and new surveys have been made. The Commissioners appointed a Board of Engineers in 1858 to examine the subject, who reported strongly in favour of docks, being constructed at Point St. Charles, and covering the shoals with wharves opposite the city for the through trade. Charles Lawrence concurred in opinion with those who had preceded him. Outside of Point St. Charles there were those who were in favor of all new works in the harbour, being in Hochelaga Bay. New works will, no doubt, be constructed there, and all the available frontage will be required for the trade which will be attracted there. In November, 1853, in a letter addressed to the Harbour Commissioners, he (Mr. Young) wrote in reference to harbour enlargement, that "it has not escaped my attention, that a very large extension of the present harbour, accommodation must be made in the direction of Hochelaga Bay. The trade in sawn lumber is rapidly increasing, and should the Montreal and Bytown railways be constructed, it must pass out of the city by the east end of the Mountain, and it appears to me that Hochelaga Bay must become a large shipping point for the wood and other goods of the Ottawa valley, necessitating the construction of wharves there, but although this will be necessary, it in no way detracts from the necessity of the construction of docks upon the Point St. Charles shoals, where warehouses, mills, &c., can be erected free from danger by ice." By the construction of the abutment and embankment of the Victoria Bridge one-third of the proposed docks are already constructed. Wharves to any extent can be built. Then water from the St. Lawrence can be easily obtained to give a depth in the dock of 20 feet, stores for grain, mills, elevators, manufactories can all be built, and all brought into convenient connection with the Grand Trunk Railway. The water power would be unlimited. The water power at Black Rock, Lockport, Rochester and Oswego has already been occupied. At New York there is no water power, and as Messrs. McAlpine, Childs and Kirkwood declared, "the facilities of Mont-

real were unequalled on the continent, and the rental from this water power would more than three times pay the cost of construction. The canals must remain where they are. The trade on them with the West is entirely different from the trade that must centre in Hochelaga Bay, and the expense of carrying there from the mills, or from the country from there of goods to the city, would be very great. The construction of this dock with dry docks has been estimated at \$2,000,000, but suppose the cost would be \$1,000,000. This at 6 per cent would be \$183,000 per annum. It has shown that the annual interest of Harbour dock now is \$22,000, which added to \$183,000 would be \$205,000, while the revenue in 1874 is estimated at \$275,000 showing that this improvement is quite within the means of the Harbour Trust, without any aid from Government, but if these means are taken to construct the channel between Quebec and Montreal it will be out of the power of the Commissioners to improve the harbour on a large scale. The expense now of doing business in the harbour is very great. It is all important in the interests not only of Montreal but of the country, that charges should be reduced, and every possible facility created. All these harbour improvements may be deemed local, yet they are of public importance, and the harbour of Montreal is more the harbour of Western Canada than it is of Eastern Canada, for the people there, through their agents in Montreal, are the largest importers and the largest exporters, and every cent saved in charges either cheapens imports to the consumer or enhances the value of the exports to the producer. It is highly important then to look at this question comprehensively. The great aim should be to lessen charges in the harbour of Montreal, and if it is true that by utilizing the water power, the rents will more than three times pay its cost, then we can look forward to the time when there will be little or no harbour dues. This it must be borne in mind has no connection with the finances of the city, for every cent collected in harbour dues is kept specially for harbour improvements, in which the whole country is interested. Mr. Young again expressed that to saddle the trade and harbour revenues with paying for river improvements, was wrong in principle, and contrary to what had been the practice. That the deepening of the lake and river was a necessity; that a harbour on the same scale was also a necessity, and that both should go on together, and that Government should assume the one, leaving the Commissioners to carry out the other. The cost of the channel so far was only \$3,200,000, while the improvement of the Clyde between Greenock and Glasgow up to 1873 had from 1773—cost upwards of \$2,000,000. He referred at length to the shortness of the navigable season, and that by enabling the 5,000 ton steamer to come to Montreal, 600 miles nearer the interior lakes than any port on the continent, this, with the facilities for transferring their several cargoes would greatly cheapen freight, lessen their time in port, and increase the number of their trips. These facilities would also enable the Grand Trunk Railway to place their rails around the dock, relieving the present inconvenience on the wharves, and enable a better connection to be made with the ocean and inland vessels. He now left the resolutions in the hands of the Commissioners. He felt it to be his duty to bring them under their attention. In years gone by he had been accused in urging these improvements from being so through interested motives, by being a large landed proprietor at the West end, and statements were made that "where his treasures were, there his heart was also;" but as this state of things no longer exists he hoped that no such arguments would now prevail, as his views were solely based on their necessity in the interests of Montreal and the country.