

THE HARBOR ELEVATORS.

The end of navigation this season sees the last of the old harbor arrangements which for several years have been found altogether insufficient for the growing demands of Canadian shippers. The immense operations which have already enlarged the berth room give some idea of the enormous increase of harbor accommodation which will be available at the beginning of next season. Last Friday's meeting of the Harbor Commissioners was an occasion which will be remembered by all as having exhibited the astonishing magnitude of the elevators and warehouses proposed for the harbor. Actually the appliances may be somewhat in excess of those proposed, but the offers that are and will be made about these harbor necessities are based on the knowledge that the want is a very great one.

The conference appointed between the Harbor Commissioners and the Conner syndicate about the erection of elevators and warehouses is an evidence that work on these will begin soon and in earnest. The importance of having at the earliest date these essentials on the enlarged harbor is evidently understood by all interested in the widening development of Canadian exports. The Harbor Commissioners, the Board of Trade, and all the seven claimants for precedence in the work of fitting up the expanded harbor with the most modern appliances appear to realize the magnitude of the undertaking. They all realizing also that there is no time to lose, are without exception anxious to start operations at the very earliest opportunity.

The Friday session, however, gave opportunity to the president of Commissioners and the Mayor to place in invidious prominence the extra special completeness of one company's proposals. This company, a total stranger to Montreal, slid quietly under the favoring notice of the president, the Mayor and Mr. Crathern, into the position of favorite for the time being. Elevator and warehouse conveniences being matters of immediate importance, dilatoriness in any candidate for the work should of course put that candidate out of the running. But were the other six companies dilatory? Were they made aware in time of what was expected of them? Were they told that a preference would be given to the company making special promise of an East End elevator and of immediate commencement? It is a great work these companies are offering for. On it depends whether or not this port, keeping first place, shall rise to the measure of Dominion requirements. On this account it was hoped nothing definite would have been settled at yesterday morning's conference. As a piece of fairness to the other companies offering and because these companies are well known and can be relied upon, a certain brief period should have to be allowed them to put their proposals in as explicit and definite shape, as the proposal of the Buffalo Conner syndicate.

The thorough preparedness of this syndicate's letter read at the Friday afternoon's session of the Commissioners was so much in contrast with the generalities of the others, that a suspicion arises that the syndicate has been discriminated in favor of, in the matter of information denied to the others. The question, therefore, springs up: What price has it paid for the information, and is this another job where there is boodle? The final rush in the negotiations at least had left no time to the Prescott company to take the question up again and state in definite terms the proposals they could make. The other five companies did not in their letters make any overt complaint about this final haste, but as none of them except the Allan Co. had anything definite to propose, it is inconceivable that definite proposals would have been wanting from them all if timely instruction had been given that these were wanted.

Judging from the way Mr. Allan's business-like proposal was flouted by one Commissioner, as a proposal "entirely in the interests of the Allan Line," this line and the other five companies should be advised that a considerable amount of cheap sentimental rant about the St. Lawrence route, and the greatness of the Dominion will perhaps go further than a business offer. The Conner syndicate seems to have known about this weakness of the Commissioners, and has laid it on pretty thickly about opening up the St. Lawrence, benefiting Montreal and the Dominion. Its precedence was secured in this way because neither the Allan Co. nor any other asked for delay and is as willing as the syndicate to start at once. In replying to the sentimental objection Mr. Allan plainly said that his proposal did not pretend to be anything else than one in the interests of the Allan line. Is any one, however so foolish as to suppose that the Conner syndicate will not work for its own hand. The blatant profession of working for the general good outside of self interest is a piece of humbug which should weigh heavily against this company instead of being used as an argument in its favor.

Again, also, its guarantees taken as supporting its claims to precedence over better known companies are utterly worthless. It guarantees 25,000,000 bushels for the first year and 35,000,000 for the second year, but as Mr. Torrance said, in speaking for Canada Atlantic, this company, the Canada Atlantic will be able next year to handle 25,000,000 or even more than that, but unless Europe wants all that grain, it cannot all be brought to Montreal elevators. In trying to pacify the Montreal Transportation Company, the Montreal Warehousing Company and the Montreal Terminal Railway Co., the Mayor mentioned that no monopoly was intended. A statement like this is worth no more than the breath which gave it utterance, as every one knows, and the Mayor not least of all, that the Elevator Company which gets the first sanction is in the best position. It by the erection of ample appliances can make it almost a virtual impossibility for any other company to hope for much success in similar enterprises at least for some time.

The Harbor Commissioners are right in getting to work, but their preference given to the Buffalo syndicate has, it will be obvious from the preceding remarks several signs of its being one more put up job. The Conner syndicate's proposal in its third item, the building of an elevator and warehouses at the east end marks still more strongly the inside nature of this syndicate's proposal as compared with the others. The East End extension of the harbour has all along been objected to by the Board of Trade as useless for many years yet, but Mr. Tarte and the Mayor got their way in this matter. This policy fought for and won in the general plans is now being exhibited in the details. Manipulation is evidently being resorted to, to get a company suitable for Mr. Tarte and the Mayor.

The same controlling influence that forced the general harbor plan to take in the East End as part of its extension is showing now in this preference of the Conner's syndicate, its presence again in the region of detail. There might have been more fair play, and it is hoped there is time yet, to give the other six companies fair play, even after a final settlement is made, but the selection is consistent with the Tarte-Préfontaine purpose. The controlling influence in the Harbor Elevator scheme is not weakening. It is quite as much to the fore in the details of that extension as it was when the general principle was carried.

Immediate action and a four million dollar outlay on the harbor which must comprise the East End. There are essential parts of the prospectus of the company now finally elected. Performance need not be up to this mark, since the company selected is the one of the controlling clique's choice.

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