

THE MONTREAL HERALD ON FREE PORT MOVEMENT

As might naturally have been expected, the movement to combine the four towns nearest to Montreal on the South side of the St. Lawrence into one big city, and to ask the Dominion Government to make that city a Free Port, has aroused considerable interest on both sides of the river. "La Presse" takes the ground that there is no necessity to argue for long on the desirability of a Free Port for Canada, the only question to be decided is where it is to be located. It is very doubtful whether a single man can be found on the South Shore who is not in favor of locating the Free Port there, but in considering the preferences of the men of the four towns due allowance, must, of course, be made for local interests and prejudices. That the realization of the project as proposed would be the making of the South Shore goes without saying. But it is to be expected that Parliament will take a wider view of the question and endeavor, at least, to divest itself of local prejudices in dealing with a subject which is of nothing less than national importance.

Even looked at from this point of view, the claim that the South Shore is indicated by nature and by existing conditions as Canada's ideal site for a Free Port is undeniably strong. That Montreal's interests are entitled to eminent consideration is beyond question, but that does not mean, by any means, that the Free Port should be located in Montreal even in the interests of Montreal. The chief objection to Montreal or its immediate neighborhood for a Free Port is that

it is impossible. Mr. Dalby, who is the originator of the scheme for the South Shore, also proposed it many years ago for the service primarily of Montreal, but he was so convinced of the impossibility of locating a Free Port in Montreal that he proposed the dredging of the Back River to accommodate the Free Port business. The trouble with Montreal as a site is that it already has thousands of manufacturing and commercial interests which would be completely upset by being interned within the walls of a Free Port—in a protectionist country. Since the idea was first mooted for the Island of Montreal there have been radical changes in the conditions on the South Shore. The Victoria Bridge is now a double track bridge, without counting the electric railway track. St. Lambert is now an important railway junction, and can be made still more important by the building of a short connecting link with the Canadian Pacific bridge at Lachine. The harbor has had considerable dredging; and the dredging of the channel, on the so-called south side of St. Helen Island, has made great progress. There are scarcely any established industries that would be injuriously affected by being excluded from the protected area of Canada. Industrially and commercially, although so near to the Canadian metropolis, the four towns are virgin soil. Consequently land is cheap compared with land on our right little, tight little island. Lighterage to Montreal and the canals would be a mere bagatelle.

The location of the Free Port, however, is not to be regarded as a ques-