

The Value of Harbours

The enormous sums of money which are reported at intervals as being spent on Harbours is an evidence of their tremendous value to any business community. For, in spite of the increasing improvements in land transportation, water carriage is, and always will be, very much less costly. But in Canada, the temptation to the very many who are situated inland, far from the harbours, is to look upon them too much as merely local additions to certain cities; thus overlooking the fact that the possession of a good, well equipped harbour is a valuable asset to the nation at large, as well as to the city in which it happens to be situated.

Therefore while Halifax, St. John, Quebec, Montreal, Vancouver and Victoria, as ocean harbours, and Toronto and other lake and river ports, are fortunate in their possession, every other place in Canada is indirectly interested in the progress and equipment of Canadian harbours.

A pamphlet just received shows the value attached to this question by the Chicago Harbour Commission, who sent Prof. J. Paul Goode, of the University of Chicago, to study the question in Europe. His report is a most interesting document, reminding one of the report issued by the Montreal Harbour Board to describe a similar trip taken by President G. W. Stephens, and Chief Engineer Cowie.

Prof. Goode divides his report into two parts: I. what the Ports of Europe are doing, and II. Chicago's Commercial Opportunity.

He takes up at the outset, the Function of the Port, and shows how geographical or economical difficulties may be overcome. Tables and diagrams are given showing the enormous growth in the business of the different ports.

Liverpool is then taken up, and the writer shows how what was a "creek of the port of Chester" has become one of the most important ports in the world, with a 35 foot channel at low water, out across the bar. This has been accomplished at a cost of about \$150,000,000, spent between 1859 and 1907. The port is managed by a Board of 28, none of whom receives a dollar in salary, nor is allowed to do any business with the Board! The expenses for the year 1906-7 were \$8,298,100. But the whole expenses have been met by the Board, neither Government or City contributing anything.

Manchester, says Prof. Goode, presents a most interesting case, for it is not a natural harbour, but is essentially the creation of human enterprise. The Manchester Ship Canal Co. only secured permission to build the 35½ mile canal in the teeth of the railway companies, the port of Liverpool and other vested interests, while the cost was over \$85,000,000.

Prof. Goode makes a very suggestive statement:—

"When Chicago made the drainage canal, it was a great undertaking and all the world heard of it. But Manchester, with only a fraction of the population or wealth of Chicago, has raised over \$85,000,000, which is considerably more than the investment of our great canal."

The writer then describes other British ports, and Havre, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Hamburg, the descriptions being illustrated by cuts, and by valuable statistics, a cut of "a row of Municipal Warehouses at Antwerp, as clean and neat in exterior as a series of Art Galleries" being very interesting.

As Chicago, an inland port, is thus looking squarely into the position and prospects, the value of a harbour must be very evident. It behoves every Canadian to help forward the harbours of his own Dominion.

Annual Officials

It is reported that the new Council of one Canadian City has dismissed all the civic officials, not with the idea of letting them all go, but merely to show that the engagement is an annual one. The argument used is that the Council will at once re-engage all that they want to retain, and quietly drop any undesirable ones by merely not re-engaging them. It is claimed that this is a less objectionable way of "weeding out" than by discharging.

Such a course is very much like the rule in the United States, where all civic officials go out at the general elections—which is strongly decried by all municipal students there.

It is, in fact, a district lowering of practise and a drop to the "To the Victors belong the spoils" system.

One of the greatest safeguards in municipal practise in the British Empire has been the fact that all municipal officials hold their positions for life, or during good conduct. This has led the occupants of these offices in the vast majority of cases to study their work so as to become experts, knowing the position to be permanent, and that only promotion to a similar but better position would lead to a change. And the vast majority of our municipal officials are zealous and painstaking, magnifying their office, and doing the best in their power for their employers—who are the citizens, and *not* the council. Their continuance in office is a most valuable counter-balance to the too-frequent changes in Mayor and Council. To mis-quote Tennyson,

"Mayors may come
"And Mayors may go,
"But they (should) go on for ever"

or rather until promotion or death gives a chance for a new official.

If the plan of change is carried out, what will it logically lead to? A new Council, composed of entirely new men, might sweep away every official. How would that town prosper?

Beyond that, it would inevitably lead to the result which is so painfully evident in the States. Every official, knowing that he may be turned out of office by the new Council, will do as little as possible for his salary. He will pull all the wires he can at the elections. And he will increase his salary as much as possible in any way possible.

Instead of having, as many places are proud to have to-day, Clerks, Engineers, Police and Fire Chiefs, who have been so long in office that they are a part, and a very important one, of the local machinery, there would be fresh men, put in for a year, to get as much, and do as little, as possible.

And what kind of men would seek a job that might not last more than a year?

Do not let us take up this worn-out idea, which is being dropped in the States as vicious, but on the contrary make our officials feel not only that their positions are permanent, but that a generous pension waits for the one who lives long enough in harness to deserve an honourable rest from the people he has served.

No Council which feels that certain officials should be dismissed should treat good and bad alike and then invite the good to stay on. For good men will not be satisfied with such treatment.

A Council should always be strong enough to dismiss any official, knowing that the electors will support their action if it is just.

Every official on the staff need not be made uneasy, so that one may be dispensed with.