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Vancouver and Proposed Harbour Improvements

Grave Doubt Expressed as to Plan Being Self-supporting and Need for Further Investigation.

The question of harbour improvements for the Port of Vancouver has been brought to public attention by the publication of Dominion Order-in-Council and by announcement in the public press by the Vancouver member to the Dominion Parliament. Some two years ago, June, 1914, the Vancouver Harbour Commissioners promulgated its by-laws for the regulation of the port and the laying of scale of dues for vessels entering the port. This aroused such a protest from the shipping interests of the city that the Dominion Government decided to hold the matter in abeyance. Shortly afterwards war broke out and the public and the shipping interests of Vancouver were under the impression that the whole subject had been dropped for at least the period of the war and perhaps until there should be some demand for increased facilities due to the growth of the port.

But it now appears that during those two years the Harbour Commissioners and the Vancouver member have been studying the subject of port improvements and it is apparent that they have awaited an opportune time for the bringing into effect of their regulations and also making a start on the large scheme of port improvements which they propose. The plan comes as a complete surprise to the shipping interests and public generally of Vancouver, who have had no opportunity of discussing a scheme which involves such a large sum of money, namely, \$5,769,128 as estimated by the Board, and in the success or failure of which they have such vital interests. Yet an Order-in-Council has been issued by the Government at Ottawa and it only remains for the Governor-General to sign to give the fiat of law. On date June 20th last this order has not been signed. Whether or not it has subsequently we have not been advised.

When the matter had been brought to public attention as mentioned above, the Merchants Exchange composed principally of the shipping interests of Vancouver emphatically disapproved of the scheme. It was brought to the attention of the Vancouver Board of Trade and referred to the Harbour and Navigation Committee

who reported adversely to the meeting of the Board of Trade held on June 27th last. After a prolonged discussion the report was laid on the table to be taken up for action at a meeting which was held on July 14th. Since we went to press before the holding of that meeting we cannot present its deliberations or action in this issue.

The Harbour and Navigation Committee met the Harbour Commissioners and the Vancouver member, and as a result reported back to the Board of Trade as follows:—

"The whole scheme has evidently been the subject of much consideration by the Commissioners and also by Mr. Stevens and was very fully explained by the latter gentleman at the meeting we had. The Commissioners are satisfied in their own minds that the whole scheme will be self-supporting; that the rents from the leases they propose to grant will pay interest on the investment plus sinking fund, and that the shipping using the port will never be called upon to contribute towards the cost of it. The Committee however regret that they are unable to accept this opinion without more tangible proof than mere assertions.

"Your Committee refer to a statement in the Order-in-Council which makes the Chief Engineer state:—

"From personal knowledge and investigation, and from evidence placed before him by the Commissioners, the several railway companies, the Corporations of Vancouver and North Vancouver, business firms and private citizens are unanimously in favour of having the scheme carried through."

"This is not in accordance with facts, as the community at large knew nothing about the scheme until Mr. Stevens made a statement to the press.

"The scheme is not the result of any demand on the part of importers, exporters or shipowners for extended facilities, but is the embodiment of what Mr. Stevens considers, from what he has seen and learnt of other ports, will eventually be necessary if this port is to handle a trade equal to say Montreal or other Eastern points. It would appear to your Committee, however, that Mr. Stevens has lost sight of one or two important points.

"The first of these is the difference in population, wealth, and industrial activity between Eastern and Western Canada. The natural desire of the West is to

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