

THE JURY,

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Which will devote its cartoons and caricatures on Provincial matters to the best interests of the community in the Maritime Provinces.

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CARTOON COMMENTS BY THE FOREMAN.



The Harbor of St. John— Shall It be Controlled by a Commission?

The question of placing the harbor of St. John in commission has long been a moot question. It has formed a theme for discussion in the Common Council, the Provincial Legislature, and the Dominion Parliament, by representatives of commerce in the Board of Trade, and by the general public. Plans have been prepared, and conferences held with the Dominion Government, with a view to the transfer of the harbor, its revenues, and its control to the latter. But from one cause or another, sometimes due to the opposition of citizens interested in wharf and other property, and sometimes to the short sightedness of representatives in the Common Council, the efforts of those who see in the change beneficial results to the city and its commerce, have been thwarted. As a result of the combination of untoward circumstances and unwise efforts, the harbor still remains in the hands of the corporation of St. John. The checks which the movement for a change of ownership and control has received, do not lessen faith in its utility or confidence in the beneficial results sure to flow from a change, nor quench the ardor of its earnest advocates. The merits of the project still stand undisputed and indisputable, and it goes without saying that the settlement of the matter must be brought about at no very distant day.

The harbor is in a condition requiring expenditures which the local taxation of the city is unable at present to bear, and the piers and wharf property require attention, and it may be considerable expenditures for needed improvements.

The amount which the Dominion Government was willing to contribute for the transfer has, of course, been based upon the income derivable from the property and its privileges, and upon such other methods of valuation as were deemed by competent judges reasonable and fair. The calculations hitherto made are susceptible of very little change. Then reproduction will be in order, whenever the subject is taken up seriously and in downright earnest. At present there is a good deal of shilly-shallying about the matter.

The main objections to the scheme hitherto were those grounded on the lessening in values

in private wharf property, and the unequal competition with which their owners would have to contend, the mode of constituting the commission, and the probable high port charges which it was imagined would prevail under a commission. The first of these objections was largely met by the power extended to the commission to purchase under arbitration; the second is not irremediable, and the latter may be regarded as a delusion.

As the matter now stands, so soon as the Common Council decide, by a two-thirds' vote, to accept the commission, then the government may act in the matter. The council's responsibility is by no means inconsiderable. The progress, or otherwise, of St. John as a port of commerce is dependent a good deal upon its decision. Will its members grapple with the subject in an intrepid and vigorous manner, free from petty and objectionable bias? The matter has several times been referred to in Mayoralty inaugurals, but thus far it seems to advance very little beyond their range. It is true that a committee has recently been engaged in a conference with the representatives of the Board of Trade, and private manoeuvres, but the amount of enlightenment which the public has received is precious little, and the progress made nothing at all. The whole matter seems enshrouded in a deeper gloom than formerly. The need of a master mind to grapple with the subject and lift it from the region of haze is very great. Who among the members of our Common Council or of our Board of Trade, is prepared to deal with the subject in the enlightened spirit, with the breadth of view and with the degree of intelligence which its importance fairly merits? Who? The JURY pause for a response. Any well directed efforts in the proper direction, grounded on common sense and on correct business principles, will receive the JURY's warmest approval.

Union of St. John and Portland.

The question of uniting St. John and Portland has at various times within the past ten or twelve years been discussed by those taking a leading part in public affairs in both cities, but, as yet, with no tangible result beyond the appointment of a committee from the councils of the two cities to confer on the matter. Whether the joint committee has even deliberated on the subject—whether, indeed, such committee has even met, is not yet known to the general public. Certainly, the committee has never seriously and in sober earnest reported to the respective bodies which its members represent.

Strangers wonder why there should be two corporate systems within the limits of the territory embraced in the two cities. And their surprise is not unnatural. The dividing line between the two localities is more imaginary than real. There is no special necessity that ordinary men can see requiring two sets of civic machinery for a territory and a population such as is included in St. John and Portland. The expense is considerable and the benefits more than doubtful. The work of practical value which both councils transact could as easily be performed by one body and one set of officials as by two. That the two cities would be better governed under a united system than under two separate systems goes without saying. It needs no elaborate argument to prove that under one system there would be a saving in expense, and an almost certainty of greater efficiency. No additional clerks might be useful in some branches of the civic service, but in the general plan of government the machinery of one city would answer equally well for both cities. Considered from every reasonable standpoint, the reasons are preponderating in favor of union, and the wonder, to those who trouble themselves to consider the

importance of civic government, is that a union of the two cities was not consummated long ago.

In arranging the terms of union a number of matters would, of course, require to be carefully considered and equitably adjusted. The arrangement of the debts of the two cities would require to be dealt with in a spirit of fairness; but even this very nice question is more a matter of accurate calculation than of anything else, and men bent in acting squarely would find no serious impediment to an honest settlement. In the water system there would be found no practical difficulty, as it is at present under one management. But in the sewerage, police, fire, streets, land, scavenger, light and other services, readjustment would be a corollary of union.

The strongest objections, perhaps, to union will be found in official circles; but even among those who figure in these circles the difficulties and the hardships are more imaginary than real. But even if the union should lop off some official excrescences, curtail some needless expenditures in cases where two persons now do the work which, under an improved system, might be readily performed by one, secure a more equitable levying of assessments and a clearer system of audit, the general public will be the gainers, as they properly should be, under all systems of reform. On the whole, the reasons are strong and preponderating in favor of consolidation and reform in the civic government of both cities, while those likely to be urged against it are lacking in power and few in number.

In any union which may be brought about, there should be a readjustment of the wards, or young districts, so that inequalities at present prevailing may be disposed of. With one mayor, one board of aldermen, one system of taxation, one board of school trustees, one set of officials, one plan for the collection of small debts, and one system in all the other civic services, the districts now known as St. John and Portland would have grand opportunities to advance the public interest on a scale of prudence and economy which other cities might emulate to their lasting benefit. Putting all gilded phrases aside, it can with certainty be said that there is before the people of the two cities a future big with promise of much usefulness. Would that the controlling spirits in both communities could be brought to understand the value of action in this vital matter. At least the joint committees might meet or, if they have already met, renew the conference, and compare notes, and then submit the result of their deliberations to the bodies which appointed them. The JURY would gladly assist the wise men of both corporations in untangling any knotty problems, however difficult to unravel, which may puzzle and perplex them.

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