

MUNICIPAL CONTROL OF WATERFRONT.

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MAYOR Oliver's address to the Union of Canadian Municipalities, in convention at Saskatoon, Sask., recently, strongly endorsed citizen control of waterfront. The gist of his paper is aptly summed up in his closing recommendations, in which he is quoted as advising thus:—

"Let no individual or corporation get between you and the water privileges if you can avoid it. Hold fast to every inch of waterfront you have. Acquire the balance by any reasonable means in your power. Control your waterfront and, if necessary, operate it, tolerating nothing that is a restraint on your trade and advancement; your sanitary requirements, and your pure air and water needs, and by all means endeavor to place something on the statutes to prevent towns to be established in the future from having to make the same up-hill fights that the majority of our cities on the waterfront are now facing."

From his paper the following potent remarks and suggestions are extracted:—

Possibly no other problem has confronted municipal representatives with as many difficult and serious problems involved, or no question is more vital to a city's interest and at the same time more hemmed in with almost unsurmountable difficulties as that concerning ownership or control of its waterlots. All agree that from every standpoint it is beneficial to every city to have complete and untrammelled control of its waterfront. Considered in the light of aesthetic, industrial and sanitary conditions, there should be no opposition to civic control. Instead of this, however, we find the waterfront of almost every city and town in a totally unrepresentable condition, the derelicts of commerce stranded on the beach, and sewers drained into the water. Docks, elevators, warehouses and boathouses are placed in positions beneficial only to the owners, while railways own the whole or the greater portion of the waterfront, which ultimately becomes a network of tracks and spurs. To aggravate the trouble, many streets are closed, and traffic is thus thrown on a few, conditions then becoming dangerous. This all goes to show that in the strenuous rush for individual and corporation gain, natural beauty, scenic grandeur, landscape planning, sanitation, pure air and breathing spots have all been ruthlessly swept aside. At the same time, opportunities for civic commerce are restricted, municipal authority ignored, and the public, whose birth-right has become the possession of the transportation corporations, struggle very ineffectively to win back the vital right of free entry.

It seems a wrong principle that as soon as a town site is laid out and plans adopted, the owner of land facing the shore can apply to government and receive deeds for the water lots in front thereof. The writer would suggest, therefore, that legislation be enacted to govern all new town sites, villages, etc., hereafter established making it imperative that the government grant the municipality the said water lots under a condition that the title can never be transferred by the city to any individual or corporation. The legislation should also allow cities to expropriate and hold water lots already deeded subject to similar conditions. By doing so, the city can advance trade and assist industries leasing sites carefully selected so as not to interfere with any civic plan, at a good rental with a reasonable increase from time to time.

It should be further suggested that a stated case should be taken to the Dominion Railway Board and a ruling obtained to the effect that no individual or corporation can prevent any person from gaining access to the waterfront or withhold trackage or spurs where asked for when the petitioners are willing to pay for any land necessary; because a persistent refusal is a restraint on trade and injurious to the general welfare of Canada.

Further, where conditions have already become acute, it would be advisable to take all ways and means to have the railroads themselves operate their railways and trackage within your city limits as a terminal railway, thus avoiding the necessity of duplicate and triplicate spurs and tracks, or the running of more than one company's cars and engines on one spur; the latter procedure being almost tabooed by railways to-day. Still better, however, would it be for the city to own and operate her own terminal railway as a municipal franchise. In the young city this would, of course, be difficult and expensive, but the municipality would be better saddled with a debt for a few years than to be cursed with the present load of trouble forever.

A municipal terminal would have to be managed by a commission, and the said commission could have, in addition, all the authority of a harbor commission. A harbor commission, such as now exists in Montreal, cannot be too strongly commended, uniting as it does assistance to trade and commerce, with sanitary cleanliness and the retaining of natural scenic and landscape beauties.

EXPERIMENTS WITH ROAD BINDERS.

Asphalt and asphaltic oils as binders are being extensively experimented with in the United States, while the use of tar has been adopted as standard practice in England and Scotland. It is essential to success with tar that it should be of uniform quality, and should be refined by heating to drive off volatile oils. Creosote and pitch are often added. The Ottawa Improvement Commission report that the use of a grade of refined tar has been attended with success. Other special materials which may be mentioned are glutrin, which is a bye-product in the manufacture of wood-pulp, and is used for spraying. An emulsified asphaltic oil is used, and another, a liquid compound, when mixed with powdered limestone, produces silicate of lime on exposure to the atmosphere. All these materials are as yet in the experimental stage, but up-to-date and progressive road authorities will not be averse to experimenting with promising materials, for only by practical tests can they discover the kind of road which is specially suited to their local requirements.

FRENCH ROADS.

An appropriation of \$6,800,000 is being allowed this year for the upkeep of the 38,337 kilometres of national highway existing in France. This will represent an increase of \$400,000 compared with a year ago, and will be an allowance of \$243.6 per mile per annum for maintenance only. For 1914 it is proposed to grant the sum of \$7,200,000 for the national highways, this being at the rate of \$302.25 per mile per annum. These figures deal only with the national highways of France, which have a total length of 23,831 miles, and are entirely under the control of the central government. The three other classes of roads, which are more or less under local control, have a mileage of 339,867, giving a total for all classes of made roads in France of 363,698 miles.