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Functions of North American Ports

At the port of Montreal, the tonnage of cargo inward does not ordinarily amount to half the outward tonnage of Canadian grain and other products for export. In consequence of this ill-balanced shipping situation, North Atlantic, American ports have been able to compete successfully with Montreal for the export of a large proportion of Canadian wheat.

But the deepening of the Welland Canal, now in progress, to enable the lake vessels to discharge near Montreal, will increase the latter's advantage. A project which may be carried out in the not distant future to canalize the St. Lawrence, so that ocean going vessels may enter the Lakes and load directly at the grain and ore shipping centers, may affect tremendously the future development of both Lake and Atlantic ports.

As regards internal problems of development, a port's function is to get goods transferred from the inland rail or water carrier to the ocean carrier, and vice versa. The movement of freight into a port by railroad, canal or coastwise steamer, however does not synchronize with its movement out by ocean carrier. As respects many commodities, such as grain, there are great seasonal fluctuations in the movement to terminals. Consequently, storage facilities must be provided to equalize and distribute the inward and outward streams of goods. The port acts both as an agency of transfer and as a reservoir for the freight which passes through it.

A distinction must be made, furthermore, between the commercial and industrial functions of the port. That is, it does not simply handle through commerce en route from the interior to foreign markets, but as an industrial center itself, it both absorbs and contributes to the commerce which it facilitates. New York for example, is a very important manufacturing center, and all large ports similarly combine commercial and industrial activities. There is often competition between the through commerce of the port and its local industries for the facilities at its command and such local industries are frequently able to exert an undue

amount of pressure to secure advantages for themselves which are detrimental to the progress of the port as a whole.

The facilities which a port requires are adequate piers and wharves to accommodate the shipping which comes to it, mechanical equipment to permit of rapid and economical handling of freight transit sheds for sorting and temporary storage of goods, warehouses, and adequate connections between all the piers, warehouses and railroads, so that freight can be moved readily and cheaply between them. The better the connections between railroad, warehouse and ship, the more cheaply and more quickly goods can be transferred from one to another of them. Other necessary services which the port must provide are dry docks and repair plants, and coal and oil bunkering facilities.

While Canadian ports are not, in general, provided with the best arranged and equipped wharfes, many of them have fairly adequate pier and berthing space for their present commerce. There is, moreover, considerable construction of this sort under way or in contemplation at most of the ports.

The urgent problem, however, is usually that of providing ready communication between piers, railroads and warehouses. This service determines the flexibility of the port's connections both with the interior and with foreign markets. It involves not merely mechanical or technical improvements, although these are highly important, but also the character of control of the port's facilities.

Most ports have developed as the terminals of a few railways. As government control over rates eliminated that method of competition rivalry at terminals was intensified. In a number of cases roads acquired much waterfront in anticipation of future needs or to prevent its acquisition by competing lines. Terminals were duplicated without adequate provision for their coordination. Steamship lines, in return for free use of a railroad's piers, have agreed to discharge and load at its piers only. Roads have refused

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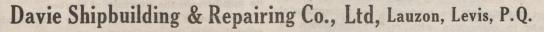
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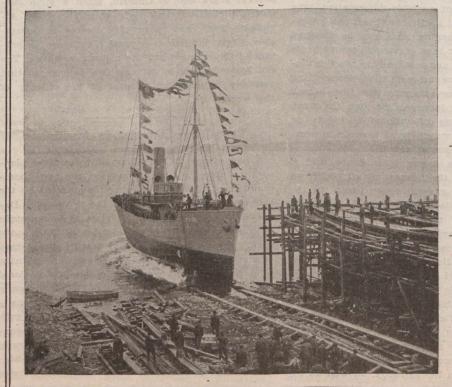
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