

PRINCE ALBERT (SASK.) SET BACK 25 YEARS THROUGH ACCEPTING MITCHELL'S REPORT ON HYDRO

The City Spent \$1,255,000 for a Useless Mass of Concrete — Engineers' Plan Had to be Abandoned Because It Would Cost Several Times the Estimate, and Because the Flow of Water Had Been Gravely Miscalculated—Mitchell's Admitted Figures in Estimate Were "Very General."

(From Toronto Telegram, April 1st.) Prince Albert, Sask., April 5.—Twenty-five miles down stream stands a huge pile of concrete and steel, blocking the North Saskatchewan River at Lacolla Falls, a mass of evidence of some one's colossal blunder. It is a grim monument of Prince Albert's disastrous venture in hydro-electric field. In cash it cost the city \$1,255,000. Measured by other standards the loss is incalculable. Mayor T. C. Davis told The Telegram man he believed the miserable affair had set Prince Albert back twenty-five years. City Clerk Webb agreed with this estimate. He said the damage wrought Secretary Mitchell of the Board of Trade thought it had arrested the city's progress by only twenty years. All agreed it was the chief contributing factor that forced the city to default on its bonds. Only business sagacity of the British bond holders and their confidence in the integrity of Prince Albert people saved the rich territory surrounding the city from the additional humiliation of court proceedings and bankruptcy. Meanwhile the whole project has been dropped. The 700 workmen were discharged and the work abandoned in 1914.

Mitchell of Toronto. Charles H. Mitchell, of Toronto, was the consulting engineer. He was employed to make the preliminary survey on which the gigantic project was raised. The total engineer's bill Prince Albert paid was \$37,612.13. Of this amount Charles H. Mitchell received \$37,783.25. Mitchell is laughing in a disconcerting manner when Mitchell's name is mentioned in connection with the great Chippawa project and the loyal committee. "I don't believe it. The public ownership spirit is very strong here. It has been somewhat bent by this miserable experience, but not broken. Prince Albert has eight thousand inhabitants. It is the centre of probably the richest section of the northwest. In 1906 the people got tired of paying an extra cent a watt for their light. They had a well administered public utility, but coal to generate electricity was costing approximately \$10 or ten here, and the price could not be produced by steam power at all."

Relief Through Hydro. In 1906, H. C. Beatty, then secretary of the Prince Albert Board of Trade, was instructed to employ an engineer to investigate the possibility of a hydro-electric project here. The city is in a sweeping bend of North Saskatchewan. Lacolla Falls presents a drop in the river level below the city of some twenty-five feet. C. H. Mitchell came to the city, and after an exhaustive investigation made a report to Board of Trade. It was most sanguine. In 1908 the city began negotiations. W. W. Morton was mayor. He is living in California now. The city officials in any way connected with the enterprise were driven from power when the attitude of the fully dawned the electors.

Mitchell's Plans. The council in 1909 authorized C. H. Mitchell to again make surveys, investigate, and prepare a report upon which, if favorable, plans could be drawn and contracts for the work awarded. He submitted his conclusions in a thirty-five page pamphlet, with drawings, and what appeared to be simple data. The Amhurst Construction Company of Montreal was employed to do the work, with Mitchell as consulting engineer. The operations were based upon the engineer's data, conclusions and advice. In length the dam was to be 765 feet, but only 298 feet were completed. It developed that the volume of water was not sufficient to justify the undertaking. The minimum flow of the river was much below the calculation. The normal continuous flow of water that could possibly be developed under the plans on which the big work had proceeded so far, was so small that it was wholly uncommercial, as the electric steam turbines that would have to be maintained for those

But the water wasn't there, any way, even if additional funds had been available. It is significant, however, that the expert sent here by Wood, Gundy Co., representing the British bondholders, to go over the situation and other expert advice secured, estimated that from \$1,600,000 to \$2,000,000 additional capital would be required to complete the work as originally planned. In fact, hundreds of thousands of dollars of material in connection with the work was on the ground when it was abandoned. Today thousands of bags of cement lie alongside the big bit of dam obstructing the river which has solidified through the action of the weather. The city took the bill for the Montreal Construction Company, for their part of the work was done or being done as agreed upon with the consulting engineer employed by the city, Mr. Charles H. Mitchell.

Impossible To Forget. Bitter things are said by Prince Albert people of all ranks when the subject is mentioned. They want to forget it but they can't for the pier dam and its twenty-five foot high concrete walls along the big ship canal, which was a part of the project, loom grand and gloomy in what was previously one of the most romantic spots along the great river in the north land. And these bitter observations are not confined to the spoken word. Some exceedingly acrimonious correspondence has taken place between Mitchell and the city. Some of it still exists. A minister aspect of the affair is that most of the records in the city clerk's office, correspondence and volumes of reports and suggestions, and what not, have disappeared. Of course there is a new city clerk, as there is a new Mayor and new aldermen, but when Mr. Webb took over the office those records were missing. Today the aldermen are handed over to The Telegram man for examination many original documents in the cases among them a copy of Mitchell's original reports of surveys and recommendations.

City Was Warned. He said, with a grim smile, that most of them were found in one of the way places in the building, but the most important in a secret drawer in what appeared to be an unused desk in the basement. Just who would be interested in destroying this mass of record evidence of Prince Albert's blunder is not even suggested. Just how much has been lost, in fact, is unknown, but it is of record that the city officials were warned by a Toronto engineering firm as well as others before the work was proceeded with of the river's minimum flow being inadequate for the hydro-electric project as outlined, and even by the Federal Government. However, the warning from Ottawa did not come in time to have saved the original investment. Today this affair is a vital vital small representations were being made concerning reimbursements to the city for some \$200,000, which the Federal Government was to pay for the city's annual in aid of the river's navigation.

Prince Albert wiggled out of its immediate financial difficulties through the foresight and generosity of the British bondholders, however humiliating the situation was that caused them to secure a compromise. They have not yet begun to see the full weight of taxation that must be imposed before the bill for this colossal simplicity is paid.

Almost a Panic. When the great hydro project was abandoned the community was in a good deal of a panic. The bonds were falling due in 1919 for this particular folly and they could not be paid. It had been sold as low as 75¢, bearing interest at 4%, which really netted the purchasers about 5% per cent. In a meeting in Toronto in 1919, with Wood, Gundy Company acting for the British bond holders and other holders of Prince Albert securities, it was agreed the whole should be refunded for a period of forty years. This total was \$8,795,000. Of this amount \$1,371,000 was represented by the bond issue of the hydro-electric project. So, of the menacing debt of the city, just one-third is accounted for from that source. The arrangement made was that for the first five years the city

MR. MITCHELL'S EXPLANATION.

"Yes, the preliminary figures were very general. The work was done on a percentage basis and my later estimates were prepared in conjunction with the engineers of the construction company. As I say, the early estimates were of a very general nature."

Some one had gravely blundered. Federal Government records of the river's flow and volume at Prince Albert was available covering the period as far as 1914. Apparently if they were consulted they were not properly digested. The error was done. Then, too, \$200,000 had been spent, and a third of the dam completed, while work had not commenced on the power house and transmission plant over twenty-five miles to bring the power to Prince Albert, yet Mitchell's carefully prepared report made from exhaustive investigations on the spot, declared that "the total cost of the plant complete will be one million and one thousand dollars."

All Suspicion Of Japan Over

General Tanaka Thinks United States Modifies Feeling and All Is Rosy.

Tokyo, April 5.—The belief that American suspicion toward Japan is now dispelled was expressed by General Baron Tanaka, ex-minister of war and successor to Prince Yamagata in the leadership of the Chuo Club. In an exclusive statement to your correspondent on his return from the Philippines. General Tanaka said: "In the eyes of the world Japanese ascendancy during the past half century has been somewhat spectacular, therefore the direction of her national policy sometimes has been made the object of sensational speculations. To my mind the source of the unfortunate rumors which have been freely circulated in regard to American-Japanese relations is mainly traceable to this psychological state of uncertainty. But, since my arrival from Manila, I have been exceedingly delighted to find out that the menace of such speculation has now been entirely eliminated. Moreover the most cordial feeling of friendliness has been expressed toward Japan by the full-hearted welcome extended our way by the Government and people of the Philippines. It is a matter of profound gratification for the future development of our traditional friendship with the Philippines and the United States that we can always depend on the resultant exchange of common interest and mutual respect which will constantly serve as the cornerstone of peace and progress in this part of the Pacific."

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A POISON STOREHOUSE IN EVERY HOME

You may not think so, but that's what happens to everyone of us when the kidneys are affected. The kidneys are the filters that remove from the blood the waste matter that acts like deadly poison on the vitality and health of the system. Dr. Hamilton's Pills stimulate the kidneys, expel fermenting matter from the bowels, restore the liver and stimulate all excretory organs. No medicine will clean up the system, tone the blood, make you feel fit and free as quickly as Dr. Hamilton's Pills. Useful and needed in every home. Dr. Hamilton's Pills of Mandrake and Butterick, 25c. Dealers, or The Catarhoose Co., Montreal.

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BEGGING QUEEN COMES TO GRIEF

Woman Won Sympathy of Rulers With Story of Dying Baby.

London, April 5.—Meet Mrs. Maud Taiting, age 44, champion begging letter writer of the world. Maud is described today in London as the "begging letter queen." She has just been convicted again and sentenced for writing her kid-dred and fifty-five "appeals." The magistrate, in giving her six months as hard labor showed that Maud had written letters to Queen Mother Alexandra of England, Ex-King Manuel of Portugal and half the crowned heads of Europe and the east.

Hungarians Deny They Can Pay Their Repairs Bill

Czech Premier's Statement They Can Pay Founded on Wrong Information.