

On Making Halifax A Great Port

And A Great Manufacturing Centre.

The Bluenose's suggestions regarding the formation of committees, or the reorganization of existing ones, to grapple in most intense earnest with problems concerning the port business and manufacturing industry of Halifax, have been received with approval by business men. In a conversation with Mr. George S. Campbell, of F. D. Corbett & Co., the other day, that gentleman spoke very warmly to The Bluenose in commendation of the ideas set forth in the articles of the 17th and 24th ult. dealing with the "Whistle of the Hong Kong Train," and "Halifax as a Manufacturing Point." At the same time Mr. Campbell rehearsed some of the history of past efforts and the discouragements encountered therein, remarking also upon the difficulties that will be encountered when new efforts are made. Despite the difficulties, however, both Mr. Campbell and The Bluenose agree, the effort is worth making, and the greater those difficulties, the greater Halifax's triumph. For we must triumph.

In discussing difficulties The Bluenose doesn't wish to scare its readers. We may as well be honest with ourselves at the start, and recognize that the task ahead of us is very difficult if we are to make Halifax a great port and a great manufacturing centre. Yet we should be happy to think that the task is difficult. No warrior rejoices in the fact that his enemy is easy game. He wants something that will test his mettle. The man who wishes to become a strong man physically, mentally or morally, doesn't deplore the fact that the way to such a goal is difficult. He takes satisfaction in the fact that his is overcoming difficulties. It's discipline. Doing things in spite of obstacles is acquiring strength. That makes character. So, if we are going to make Halifax great, the way lies over difficulties, and we should take satisfaction therein. When we have overcome the difficulties (as we must and shall if we are earnest enough and have sufficient force of character), we will be able to hold the position, for we will have learned in the struggle some of the great lessons of advancement that can only be learned in the school of experience.

In going into the question of port business, there arise numerous little things that must be straightened out. These are frequently ramifications of great things, whose accomplishment depends upon the disposal of the former. For instance, take the question of the Intercolonial Railway. It is the people's railway, and there are interests to be considered all the way from here to Montreal that clash more or less with one another and with the interests of Halifax. This was illustrated in Mr. Harris' fruitless efforts a few years ago to put the I. C. R. on the same footing as roads operated by private corporations. Political influences in a government railway in Canada are antagonistic both to the true success of the road, and, perhaps, the greatest good of the country. This obtains not alone in the adjustment of rates, but in the service of the railway. A government railway will calmly submit to incompetence in its officers that a private concern would never stand. We do not mean to say that the I. C. R. officials as a whole are incompetent, for that would not be stating the truth. Yet it will likely be found that there are several among the

number. And even if there were only one, that one would be sufficient to throw the whole machine out of working order. A committee that will take up the I. C. R. as a subject for investigation will find that there are many things to be corrected there before the best interests of the port can be conserved. And they will find that it will be an uphill fight to have these things corrected. And probably the greatest difficulty in the way will be the political prejudice and political influence. But the committee would have to make up its mind that there must be no political bias in its movements. That would be disastrous. The minute that its members commence to be Liberals and Conservatives, and cease to be Haligonians, then the whole thing will be spoiled.

It is felt by most business men in this city that the true solution to our difficulties consists in bringing the C. P. R. into Halifax. It is not the general desire to hand over the Intercolonial to that corporation. But everyone would desire to see an equitable arrangement made whereby the C. P. R. might come into this city and erect terminals here. It would be the quickest solution to the Fast Line problem. If the C. P. R. could build such terminals with absolute security, knowing that there would be no possibility of a hitch resulting from a misunderstanding with the government, we would quickly have a fast line of steamers between Halifax and the old country, for such would be a logical and necessary extension of their service. Now it will not be an easy thing to secure the C. P. R., not because that railway is not willing to come to Halifax, but because the ownership of the I. C. R. by the people stands in the way. The same thing holds true respecting the Grand Trunk or any other great line whose rails run away into the fruitful West. But because of the very difficulty there is need for strong effort, more thought, more diligent collection of data and greater expenditure of energy in making the same effective. If the introduction of the C. P. R. to Halifax on just terms would benefit Halifax, we ought to have it. If we ought to have it, it is time to make an effort in that direction. The sooner the better.

Having considered one of our propositions, let us turn to the other for a moment or two. It is to be recognized that important as is the question of developing Halifax as a port, it is also important that we should develop the city as a manufacturing centre. Business men agree on this point, though there is some dispute as to the possibility of developing manufacturing to any great extent. Some think that public interest will not aid matters if private enterprise does not take hold naturally and on business principles. Yet there is this to be taken into consideration (and most people will admit that it is so), much good can be accomplished by gathering together all the information possible to prove that Halifax is an advantageous point for the manufacturer to select as a field for his enterprise, and by learning what influences prevent Halifax from being such, and preparing measures that will lead to their removal. After discussing a point regarding the latter division of such a committee's work, all will take up our point in favor of Halifax as a manufacturing centre.

In last issue we suggested taxation as a matter that would admit of some investigation in order to learn whether we cannot do something to encourage manufacturing by reforms in this department of civic management. It is considered by most business men that the weakest point Halifax has to show to the manufacturer who might consider the feasibility of locating here is this very question of taxation. Indeed, one manufacturer told The Bluenose—we are now speaking of one who has a large factory in this city, employing 300 hands—that he would enlarge his factory so as to double his output, were it not for the fact that the assessments would come round and think he was getting too prosperous. Our system of taxation seems to put a premium on disregard for appearances and to encourage lack of progressiveness. The man who improves his store and makes himself a credit to the city has to pay for the privilege. The other man escapes the tax gatherer. But this is going over old ground. It has been long recognized that our system of taxation fails to meet our greatest needs. This principle was so recognized not long ago that an attempt was made to revise the law that it might operate with better results. The history of that attempt is well known. This immediately presents another difficulty. How are we going to be more successful with another attempt? The committee that would take such a matter in hand must not lack courage and determination. If after framing a law that would answer all tests it finds it unfavorably received by the City Council and Provincial Legislature, then it should gird on its strength and fight until the justice of their cause is recognized and we succeed in having a system of taxation that will be an encouragement to the manufacturer instead of a discouragement.

After looking upon the discouraging side of this question, let us turn to something more encouraging. If we have things that operate against us and are hard to correct, we have also things that operate in our favor. For instance, the cost of power. Manufacturers may not be aware that Halifax offers the best inducements in the province in the matter of cheap power. This power is gas. The advantages attending manufacturing within city limits are many, but the expense of fitting up an extensive steam plant with all the necessary accompanying boilers, not to mention the difficulties that offer in endeavoring to secure a property in the city for this purpose, deter manufacturers from considering the question. To illustrate the cheapness of gas as power, a manufacturer in Halifax is operating a plant requiring about eight horse-power with gas engine; the average run of engine is twelve hours per day, working at full load, at an average cost of \$12 per month, or \$144 per year. This figure covers all cost of running. Formerly this manufacturer operated his factory by steam. His annual bill for coal averaged \$235. To this was added fireman's wages, per year, \$500, and sundry wear and tear expenses, such as attention to boiler, repairing and keeping in order and removing grates, beside all the trouble and expense in connection with storing coal and disposing of ashes.