

(November 28)

A Harbor Commission for Toronto.

BY CONTROLLER F. S. SPENCE.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "A Harbor Commission for Toronto," Controller F. S. Spence said:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—When you come across the Atlantic, enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence, get into the middle of the Straits of Belle Isle, you are just 2,234 miles from Liverpool; and you have before you 2,259¾ miles of water navigation to Port Arthur. When Providence laid out this continent it was done on a wonderful scale—an unequalled waterway and means of access right into the very heart of the best and most productive part of it, and of all that 2,259¾ miles there are only 73½ miles that men need to touch. To effect this navigation you have 2,186 miles of open water, and at Toronto, just about halfway from Belle Isle to Port Arthur, Providence scooped out one of the finest harbors on the face of the earth. And, by a curious combination of circumstances, right alongside that harbor—of course its beauty and usefulness are not developed yet, but they are potential—right alongside that harbor is placed and retained until the time has come when it can be used to the public advantage an immense area of in the neighborhood of fifteen hundred acres of the best industrial sites to be found on this continent.

Now, the proposition we are dealing with is the co-ordination and development of that industrial location and this harbor upon that wonderful waterway. May I say, preliminarily, that I am not at all an advocate of what is generally called government by commission. I hope we will never have government by commission in this country. It may have advantages and benefits in the United States, where methods are not so democratic, where the people have not got so much control of administration as they have under the British system. We want to keep away from that plan as long as we have a better one.

* Controller F. S. Spence was long celebrated as a temperance advocate before he entered municipal politics in Toronto. His work in the temperance arena had much to do with the expansion of the wide areas of "dry" territory in Ontario. As an alderman and latterly as member of the Board of Control of Toronto he has been steadily conspicuous for his clear understanding of municipal problems, for his defence of the rights of the people, and for his work to promote improvement in the city's harbor.

Just a word or two along that line. You must bear in mind that government has two diverse, essential functions. There is the function of legislation and the function of administration, and the work of legislation cannot have too broad a basis. Originally our race took every citizen into that work, in the sharing of it. The old English folkmoot was on the hillside, where the citizens passed the laws, and appointed the sheriffs to carry them out. As time went by it became impossible for everyone to have a hand in legislation. We eventually appointed chiefs of the various bands, who got together to consider what kinds of laws ought to govern the people, and afterwards this principle has been worked so that the more men you can get together for legislation the more points of view you will bring to bear on the question considered. You want to have the work done by the largest body of men, as representative of the people and of the whole country, and still not be unwieldy.

Now, for the other function of government the case is totally different. Administration is best done by the fewest men that can well attend to it. It needs, however, to be made, as far as possible, first, concentrated; secondly, specialized; and, thirdly, responsible. Through a thousand years of careful experience and planning and thinking we have developed the English plan, which is this: That you have your legislative body, and you have your administrative body. A fundamental principle of our method is that the administration must be responsible to the legislature; that any man who is charged with an administrative duty must, either personally or through the head of his department, be represented on the floor of the legislature, and the people's representatives control the purse-strings; that the administration is controlled by the representatives of the people, who criticize or approve of the acts of the head of every administrative department, and that is what we call responsible government.

Compare it for a moment with the United States method. In the nation, in the city, in the municipality, they elect the legislature as we do, and they bring it as far as possible into harmony with public opinion; but when they come to the administrative part of government, they take it away from the control of the representatives of the people. They elect a president every four years, and every member of his cabinet is chosen by the president, without the people having any voice in it, and not a man can put his nose inside the legislature or have anything to say. The result is that you have an arbitrary form of government, radical, and different from the British

form of government. We have a legislature representative of the people, and every one who administers a great department sits there and gives an account of his stewardship. The same is carried down to the cities. The average American mayor is a man who is not allowed to go into the council chamber; and he, with the advice of two or three ward bosses, appoints all the officials—for the police department, the fire department, the charity department, the property department—so that the people have the disadvantage of having no control over their administrative officials.

The result has been the adoption of what they call the commission plan. That is, they have made the administrative officers responsible to the people by electing them directly, but forgetting the importance of the legislative function, they have appointed or selected too small a body to do the legislative work effectually, and the result is that they run up against difficulties right away; and, to make their basis of legislation broader, they have had to add the referendum system to the commission plan—altogether a complicated method of obtaining what is in our country obtained by a very much simpler plan. Not only that, but by concentrating all business in the hands of a few men, and by giving the people only an occasional chance to have a selection of the men who are in charge of the government, public interest, under the commission plan, in public affairs fades away, and at several conventions recently in the United States, where men of legislative experience have met, there has been denunciation of the commission plan, and I think it will not be long before they are tired of it.

The administrative body of control in the city of Toronto, responsible, having seats in the local parliamentary body, under the English responsible government plan, are every day, or at every meeting at any rate, under fire from the representatives directly of the people, all their financial affairs subject to reversal and criticism. The Council handles the purse-strings, bringing to bear upon legislative work as broad an extent of public opinion as you can desire. Do you not think the responsible plan of government is better than any poor fad of democratic and oligarchic character?

You will find, however, that for the performance of certain duties, both under the American system and our Canadian system, we have adopted the administrative commission plan—remember, not a body to do government, but a body to do some executive work. The illustrations will come to your mind at once. The carrying out of the railway law is entrusted to the Dominion Railway Commission; the administration of the co-

operative movement for the union of municipalities for cheap power is committed to the Hydro-Electric Power Commission. Then there is the Niagara Falls Park Commission, the license commissioners appointed to administer the license law in different parts of the Province, the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board, the Technical School Commission, and so on. They are bodies, remember, not appointed to even do administrative work, not appointed to do any legislative work, but simply appointed to gather some information or frame laws to do some particular thing. The executive or administrative commission, appointed by a responsible, rightly-constituted British form of government to do a particular kind of work has been found to be a very effective plan for the accomplishment of results.

Now, let us come down to the particular application of that to the condition we find here. This movement for Toronto harbor—originated by the Board of Trade and promoted by the president, who has given so much energy and attention to it—was primarily an industrial proposition. It was not an unfair proposition. It was a proposition to place in the hands of a body that would have continuity, that would specialize and try to concentrate the administration of that great industrial area known as Ashbridge's Bay, to the east of the harbor, occupying some 1,350 to 1,500 acres of land and water, that wanted to be filled up. It belongs to the city; it is public property, which should be made a location for industrial sites.

How is the best way to carry it out? This harbor needs to be dredged. It needs to be supplied with docks, wharves, and warehouses. When you come to dredge out a channel you take up the very material to best fill up the land. What you take out to make deep approaches and dredge channels can be used for the foundations of docks and the filling up of the land, and the use of this land for industrial sites is an important matter for a harbor commission. The present Harbor Commission is composed of two members of the Board of Trade, two members of the City Council, and an official appointed by the Dominion Government. These five men look merely after the harbor, in the way of keeping it dredged, the approaches deepened, and the dues collected. If that body's functions were to be enlarged, in order to administer the harbor and its adjacent industrial areas, with wharves to accommodate the factories, and railway lines upon the wharves, leading up to the factories, you should have these matters in the hands of a permanent body, concentrated, and with continuity—that is, the whole body and bones of this harbor commission idea.

Now, let me point out, that in dealing with our water-front we have, at the present time, a good many jurisdictions. The present Harbor Commission controls the dredging of channels, collecting of dues, and the regulating of boats coming into the harbor. The Dominion Government controls the approaches, and spends annually thousands of dollars in building entrances and dredging channels. The docks and wharves that belong to the city lying along the water-front are handled by the Property Department. The location of sites is looked after by the Assessment Department, and the life-saving and maintenance of order is in the care of the Police Department—six separate bodies. All these functions could be a great deal more successfully operated by one commission, given power to deal with the whole of it.

The report that comes before the Council is, in a few words:

“That the constitution of the Board of Harbor Commissioners for the City of Toronto be changed so as to provide that hereafter the said board shall consist of five members—three to be appointed by the City Council, one by the Governor-in-Council on his own motion, and one by the Governor-in-Council upon the recommendation of the Board of Trade of the city—the term of office of each of the commissioners to be for a period of three years, with power of removal and withdrawal.

“Under the present law the Council of the city appoint two commissioners, the Board of Trade appoint two, and the majority so appointed recommend a fifth commissioner, who is appointed by the Governor-in-Council.

“The method of appointing the commissioners chosen by the city shall be the method prescribed by statute for the appointing of civic departmental heads—that is, they shall be nominated to the City Council by the Board of Control, and no appointment shall be made in the absence of such nomination without a vote of two-thirds of the members of Council present and voting, but the majority may refer back such nomination.

“The city shall vest in the said Board of Commissioners the management and control of the area known as Ashbridge's Bay, along the dock property and water lots owned by the city in the harbor, along the lake shore westerly to the city limits, and along the lake shore easterly from Ashbridge's Bay to the city limits; also the docks, shores, or beaches of the city's Island property, only as far

as is necessary for the protection and development thereof, and the regulation of the use thereof by boats, canoes, and other vessels. The control of any water-front park, garden, playground, boulevard, drive, or other recreation area shall remain with the City Council.

"The commission will hold, develop, and administer on behalf of the city the property vested in it by the city, accounting to the city for all its financial transactions, the books of the commission to be at all times open to the inspection of the city Audit Department.

"After providing for the administration of the said property and the performance of the other duties imposed upon the commission and for capital charges upon money borrowed by the commission for improvements, any surplus profits derived from the administration of the city property placed under the commission's control shall belong to the city, and shall be paid over to the City Treasurer by the commission."

A further clause provides for the placing in the hands of the commission the other properties and the other functions that I have mentioned already, and the whole is to be a board in the interests of the City of Toronto—practically a trust board for the City of Toronto.

Now, then, why not a government commission? Why not a civic commission, appointed by the City Council alone? The duty of controlling navigation is constitutionally and permanently a Dominion function. The Dominion will not delegate that function to any body that it has not created or that is not a body of which it has something to say in the management. The Government now has a representative upon the Harbor Commission. But the proposal here is that a great deal of work that is done by the Government independently shall be vested in this Harbor Commission, that the management of all these entrances, the control of lighthouses, the policing of the Bay, and life-saving shall be held by one body.

Then there comes up the exceedingly difficult question of financing so big an enterprise as this. I will tell you the way it is done in Montreal. Montreal has no interest whatever in the Harbor Commission, owns no property that they gave over to the Harbor Commission. All the property that is used is Government property, and the Government appointed the whole of the Board of Commissioners to administer that property. The Government has lent that commission the sum

of \$12,000,000, which the commission expends for the purpose of improving navigation, for docks, wharves, channels, and all that sort of thing. The revenue from these improvements enables the Harbor Commission to pay rent and interest, and they have never defaulted in paying all that large amount of money.

Why should not the Dominion Government recognize Toronto as it recognizes Montreal? Why should not it help us to have the kind of national port they have at Montreal. Is it not that there is any rivalry, and there need never be. Montreal has a thirty-foot channel down to the sea. There will always come vessels to Montreal that will not come up the St. Lawrence canals and go away to the far West. There will always be the transshipment of freight and passengers, and everything of that kind, at Montreal from inland vessels to ocean vessels. There may be canal vessels that will come up, call at Toronto, and get away round to the north shore of Lake Superior, pick up a great deal of freight, profitable commerce, at Duluth, Chicago, Milwaukee, and other Western ports that now finds its way down to Buffalo.

A word or two to show that, notwithstanding the fact that we are building transcontinental lines, they will never be able to take care of the transportation interests of this country, rapidly as the West is growing. The last year for which we have full returns is 1908, and in that year the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Grand Trunk Railway brought grain to the amount of 285,262 tons to Montreal, while at the same time down the St. Lawrence and down the Erie and Welland Canals, having to tranship at Buffalo and at Port Colborne, there went 760,374 tons—nearly three times as much as went over the two transcontinental railways. That grain will, of course, not bring very much to Toronto.

Look at Toronto—its location. West of you lies the granary of the Empire. Away to the east of you lie the markets of the British Empire. Right here at Toronto you are where the raw materials produced in other countries and produced in Northern Ontario can be manufactured into the finished products. Here is the point of transshipment, and here is the site for industrial undertakings. There is a railway on the east side of the Don and a railway on the west side of the Don that the city has the right to take over at any time at a slight advance on the original cost of construction. In fact, all three of the great railroads have access to this industrial site. Here you have in the Ashbridge Bay site three transcontinental roads put into direct contact with the

possibilities of deep waterways; Pennsylvania coal at a very low rate; enlarged canals to cheapen transportation, and the factories brought into contact with Ontario ore that will come down from the Northern country. These enlarged canals mean the bringing here of English raw materials at a low cost. The new industries mean an appreciable increase in population through the employment provided. These industries mean that you have turned aside a great part of the developed energy at Niagara. In fact, you have got a situation that cannot be paralleled on this continent.

May I read to you two or three sentences from the report of President Stephens of the Montreal Harbor Commission, after he came back from the Old Country, being sent over by the Government to find out about the ports there? He says:

"The ports that are doing the biggest business, and doing it most efficiently, are the ports that have kept their facilities ahead of actual requirements.

"Unity of authority, concentration of business, depth of water areas, and facilities for despatch of business are the prominent characteristics of successful port administration.

"Great port development has invariably been followed by increase of trade and population."

He emphasizes over and over again that if you are going to have a harbor and port business you must make preparations for your business before it comes.

Gentlemen, I just finish as I began. Providence has blessed us with the location. Providence has given us opportunities that it just wants a little effort of ours to develop into possibilities, into operation; that will give Toronto a position as an industrial and commercial centre that I do not believe its most sanguine citizens have ever anticipated, and because I think all that can be carried out more effectively by the plan outlined in this report of the sub-committee of the City Council, advocated by the Board of Trade, and endorsed by the harbor commissioners of the City of Toronto, I have pleasure in recommending that project to your favorable consideration.
