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PUBLIC BLAMED FOR LOSS OF WATERFRONT

Portland Man Gives Interesting Sketch of Struggle for Valuable Rights along Willamette River, Showing Where People Failed to Act.

- ♦ To Guard Harbor Rights.
- ♦ Protection of the harbor area up to ordinary high water lines.
- ♦ Protection of the central harbor area for use and to prevent the railroads from using terminal advantages there as a differential against water shippers.
- ♦ East Side trans-shipment terminals.
- ♦ A belt line.

By J. B. Siegler.

There is an ancient law of the world, incorporated into the law of the United States and of Oregon, that the waters of the earth are free to all men for navigation and maritime commerce.

The Supreme Court of Oregon has abrogated this law as far as any of the waters of Portland Harbor over which the State has any control is concerned, and divested the public right in \$60,000,000 worth of harbor area.

The Dock Commission has asked the legislature of the state to extend to it the jurisdiction to enforce that law. It refused.

The waters of the harbor, inalienable under the laws of civilization, have, of late years, after many tests for the possible success of such a venture, been platted and sold by private adventurers and speculators.

Private claimants and their attorneys besieged the legislature and the court, putting up every possible kind of a plea, to defeat the efforts of the Dock Commission to take possession of this public property, obedient to the need for navigation improvements, the sole purpose for which the state holds its inalienable trust title.

It has, at this time, been defeated. Had the commercial and public organizations of Portland got behind the Dock Commission and supported its rights, the result would have been different.

Public will rules all things in this country, when exercised upon its executive and judicial representatives. When the public will is not exercised, the private wills have their anarchical and destructive way. The public will is somewhat capricious, only fitfully conscious—like the waters of the sea. The private will is like a column of water on a turbine wheel, organic, tireless and effective.

To harness the public power, and turn it upon the municipal wheel, is the problem, the solution of which will free the port commerce from private tyranny.

Are our civic organizations, commercial clubs, business men's clubs, chambers of commerce, push clubs, public organizations? Or are they merely banded special and private interests?

In the hearings before the legislative committee on the Dock Bill, where were they?

In the hearing of the dock right before the court, the railroads and others appeared as amici curiae. What Amicus Curiae was sent by the Chamber of Commerce or the Commercial Club?

However, in this fight which decides whether the weight of \$60,000,000 worth of foreshore is to be used for its natural and legal purpose, to aid public industry, or to be piled upon its back for the benefit of private usurpers; we have at length heard from the Chamber of Commerce. A committee from that body appeared before the Dock Commission Wednesday to hammer the East Side Dock. They have, at last, found a point in the issue which appeals to them.

They are patriots. There must be no East Side and no West Side—only a West Side.

the lion's share of the improvement has been conceded to the West Side, although it was shown in the hearings before the Dock Commission's consulting board of engineers, that the most urgent immediate need was a dock on the East Side to enable the East Side shippers to receive goods and ship direct from that side. It was shown that loss of orders often resulted from the delays incident to drayage to the congested West Side terminals.

It was shown that aggravating negotiations had to be made as to shipment of heavy engines from the East Side that had been refused permission to cross the existing bridges.

The agricultural implement district suffered from a handicap, demanding relief more than any other. So efforts have been made to create a terminal there, relieving them and putting them on an equal plane with other districts.

The board of engineers diplomatically conceded to the West Side the large docks that naturally belong on the East Side, where transshipment can be made without cluttering up the harbor with unnecessary bridge draw operation. But they also recognized the neglected East Side warehouse district and located a small dock, 520 feet long, at the foot of East Washington street.

Why Remain Silent? In these hearings the East Side people would not have appeared had it not been for the watchfulness of the writer of this letter. The present knockers did not oppose them, and have not until now, when having been encouraged by the court decision, they enter this diagenous plea of "exorbitant prices for sites."

Why have they been silent in the condemnation proceedings for the West Side sites? Are the people who testified to values over there of \$1500 to \$2000 per front foot in this hammering venture and making this plea?

These gentlemen should stop and forget it. Let Mr. Teal stick to his harmony plea. What we want is the strength of all, co-operating to the economic development of home industries and foreign commerce. Cut out the rough stuff. Cut out the private raidings for unwholesome investments and profits. Cut out the jobbery by which public properties and funds are directed to private benefit. Laudable investments and \$ per cent profits should take the place of questionable schemes, artificial promotion and cut throat profits.

All public improvements, transportation terminals, traction line centers must be congested and corraled in one district. Why? Is it most convenient or economic? No.

Important Public Hearing. In December, 1910, when the consulting board of engineers, who drew the admirable plan embodied in the commission's report, and the Dock Commission, held a public hearing relative to the dock plans, the writer was extended the courtesy to address the board. The following is the gist of his remarks. As it contains the basis of the argument for the plans now attacked, I beg leave to put it before the public:

"The discussion of the improvement of this harbor in the public hearing granted last Thursday has been devoted entirely to the consideration of the west shore. (No East Side shippers were there.)

"That the harbor has an east shore, and that it is necessarily the one first reached by railroads assembling cargo from a continent lying to the east, has been overlooked.

"The oversight is peculiar, but I will waste no time discussing it or the reasons urged for the West Side sites. That has been so thoroughly done that I feel entirely free to devote my time entirely to a hasty outline for a development of the east shore.

"The map of the harbor presents a physical outline roughly analogous to your own New York harbor, now the first of the world. The Washington shore takes the place of the New Jersey shore; the Columbia, the North River; the Peninsula, Manhattan; the Willamette, the East River; while the west shore occupies the place of Long Island and Brooklyn.

"Dock improvement is an enterprise of the City of Portland, hence due consideration and justice should be given to the interests of Portland property as indicated by the assessment roll. Parallel with this, however, should be weighed the future economy of harbor development, considered from the point of the Portland traffic center which is not defined by the city limits. Judicious determination between these two views will favor rather than hurt the present property and inestimably enhance the value and business of the port and dependent properties. It will also make for economy and low traffic rates and this is the determining element in the direction of traffic development.

of railways, related settlement, and development of water transportation are determining a dominant Pacific port, like New York for the Atlantic coast. In this contest every facility, like an inviting and economical dock transference, counts many points.

"Our land traffic entering the Willamette harbor comes practically entirely from the eastward. Our water traffic from the westward, and is distributed in the same way, i. e., land destined to the east of the Willamette, and water to the west. Consequently the proper points for transshipment from water to land and from land to water are at the line of first meeting, which is on the east side of the Willamette. This avoids overlapping or crossing of the land and water shipping, and minimizes the congestion of trans-shipment traffic, already an irritating problem endangering the best development of the port.

"The only exception to this general rule is that goods either from or to local shipping districts of the city should be provided for by a system of local docks properly supplied with facilities for truck or trackway distribution.

"The closing of the harbor at the Broadway bridge will give the railroads having central city terminals a differential in their favor over water lines equal to the cost of reloading and distributing from down-river docks.

"The factoris controlling our transportation destinies today are the O. W. R. & N. and S. P. & S. railroads, i. e., the Harriman and the Hill systems. They are rivals and both probably present a hostile attitude to public waterways and ports.

"Their efforts, arising from this attitude in acquiring and monopolizing strategic points, force the public into the very illogical and uneconomic position of a rival also. Industrially, they are not rivals but complementary. Their wasteful rivalry arises merely from the non-Catholic character of their ownership, while the business in itself is Catholic. It is the duty of the public through government to correct, by judicious control, this waste. And this cannot be done without the public possessing, recognizing and using economic strength that will raise it above a position dependent on these private rivals."

Pioneer Portland was located on the west side of the river because the first settlers found that shore more amenable for landings, and there was a sufficient area of level land for the then needs. Ben Holladay, the first successful railroad builder of Oregon, entered this transportation field with his line of coast steamers, then along a more extensive and essential coast trade than any we today possess, including Mexican and South American as well as northerly ports. The threat of railroad connection with San Francisco drove him into the "Oregon Central Railroad" enterprise.

Holladay, while a most sagacious, alert and vigorous organizer, was a mere opportunist. He borrowed German capital. Following that came Henry Villard to inspect the securities. Villard was a student, a publicist, a sociological writer of as much mental alertness as Holladay, better informed and educated, with a more influential clientele.

"Holladay soon fell, and upon his ruins arose Villard. "Villard was also what is called a 'dreamer,' that is, he had intellectual perception and could form a concept of the future. It is the opposite of the mere opportunist always egoist and Philistine and in the long run obstructive.

"His idea—his dream—was a railroad system based on the Columbia River, serving the Columbia Basin, with Portland its metropolis. No rival lines were to enter that territory. His dream came true, with a trans-continental line, the Northern Pacific thrown in for good measure.

"Villard now organized his great terminal connecting his rail lines, S. P., O. R. & N. and Northern Pacific and local feeders, with this seaport.

"Holladay's terminal was laid out on the East Side. This antagonized the pioneer West Side merchants, and Holladay, in absorbing the West Side line (Joe Gaston's) and negotiating to that end, purchased the West Side terminal, now the Northern Pacific terminal, subject to a condition that it should be the sole terminal for his lines for 50 years.

"Villard was not bound by this contract and proceeded to develop a plan for a grand terminal property, all his, but covering every part of the harbor. (From his plan the writer got the suggestion of a similar terminal controlled by the city and conserved for the use of all common carriers, adopted at the last election.)

bridge to the narrow place at Holladay avenue.

"The breadth and comprehension of Villard's views made him enemies in Portland, and in his day of fate, they joined hands with his defeated enemies among the stock holders of the N. P. and Villard went down as Holladay before him.

"His magnificent terminal property was now broken up and resulted, in the present arrangement of 40 per cent Northern Pacific (Hill) and 60 per cent O. R. & N. and S. P. (Harriman), which is equal in railroad circles to 100 per cent for the dominating company.

"The result was Harriman domination and tyranny for Portland, and lack of co-operative terminal service for the districts supplied by the Harriman and Hill lines. This depressing rivalry extended to the hinterland service, to the rate structures, and finally resulted in Portland being turned down by both systems in deference to their preferred ports of San Francisco and Puget Sound.

"Hill, on building the North Bank, secured the Portland terminal property secretly. He had to contest every foot of the way across the Peninsula. He tried to get into East Portland by tunneling Irvington, and gave it up. He had to admit the Harriman lines to his Columbia bridge, in obedience to federal common user, but has failed to profit by the common users on the East Side, as they are put in cold storage by the Harriman lines. Common user on the new steel bridge should be made available to the Hill lines. This would give those lines access to the continental approach to the harbor and obviate hauling their traffic across the river twice.

"The C. M. & St. Paul is confidently believed to have an option on the Inman Poulsen tract. This should be the common terminal point for Southeast Side lines. One dock should go there; one for Central East Portland; one in Lower Albina, and heavy transshipment terminals on the Peninsula north of Columbia dock, all connected by a belt shore line.

"Hill men favor such a municipal terminal.

"They say they favor a common terminal, either private or municipal, on a 50 and 50 basis, but regard their 40 per cent stock in the Northern Pacific Terminal Company as a non-available asset. This contention illustrates the economy of an absolute common terminal, as well as being more satisfactory and inviting to railway development.

The people of the Hill office are much interested in the East Side common user lines, and would gladly avail themselves of their use. These common user lines are the new steel bridge and 1000 feet on west approach and 2000 feet on east approach on main line of O. R. & N. as now definitely located, on equal terms, and East Third from East Ankeny to Hawthorne."

Then followed some statistics as to volume of East Side traffic. I quote one item: "John Deere Company received in 1909, 202 cars of machinery. Of this, going out, 20 cars were loaded on the East Side. The rest was trucked across the river."

The plea that ships cannot come up in the central harbor is the most shameful and baseless one. The water is the deepest in the harbor, and that part of the harbor is an asset worth many millions to the city, much more than the bridges are worth.

No shipper above the bridges has ever had any difficulty in getting ships to come to his docks.

To summarize, four things should be held firmly in mind: Protection of the harbor area up to ordinary high water line. Protection of the central harbor for use, and to prevent the railroads from using terminal advantages there as a differential against water shipping. East Side transshipment terminals. A belt line.

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