

1944-1-29 Journal of Commerce

Mid-Scotland Ship Canal

Glasgow Chamber's Duty

Criticism of Committee's findings

CRITICISING the attitude of a committee of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce on the question of a mid-Scotland ship canal, Mr. P. D. Ridge-Beedle, at the annual meeting of the chamber, urged that all the evidence in favour of the project should be collected and submitted to the Government, in order that Scotland might share in the benefits of such an undertaking.

In the report on the business of the past year, it was stated that the committee had resolved to recommend that the project of the canal as a commercial proposition could not be supported, but the directors had decided that the matter should remain open for further discussion.

Mr. Ridge-Beedle congratulated the directors on the wisdom they had shown in coming to that decision.

The committee's recommendation, he said, would be perfectly sensible and reasonable if the Chamber of Commerce was asked to issue a prospectus appealing to the investment public to support a Mid-Scotland ship canal company, but the position was altogether different. The committee had looked at the matter from the wrong standpoint. That was a scheme in which the Government would supply the money, and the duty of the chamber, which existed to foster prosperity in its area, was plain. It was to collect all the evidence it could possibly get in favour of the canal and put it before the Government.

SERIOUS MISAPPREHENSION

The Chamber's committee had further stated that if the cost was to be in the neighbourhood of £70,000,000, or even £50,000,000, such national money might be expended in other ways to achieve much greater benefit for Scotland. That showed a serious misapprehension. The committee seemed to have looked upon the matter as a parish-pump scheme to give a dole to Scotland.

That was not the idea at all. It was a scheme for Great Britain and that area had been chosen only because of its geographical position, as the place where the North Sea and the Atlantic were brought closest together. It was owing to that lucky circumstance that they had a chance of that great scheme, and if they did not accept it the money would not be spent in Scotland but would quite likely be spent in England.

Manchester people were agitating for the Manchester Ship Canal to be extended to the East Coast, and that was not such a fantastic scheme as might be imagined if they looked at the territory through which it would pass. There was also a proposal for a canal from Carlisle to Newcastle, so that what some people in Scotland were rejecting other people would be glad to have. It left one with an unpleasant impression that some vested interest, such as that of the railway companies, had managed to make its influence felt.

The chamber's committee had had a gift horse put before it, and it had not been satisfied merely with looking in its mouth, but had given it a good slap to ensure that it galloped away.

Mr. Hird said he was sure the remarks Mr. Ridge-Beedle had made would be duly noted and given consideration by the directors when they next dealt with the question of a Mid-Scotland ship canal.

SCOTTISH M.P.S' SUPPORT

Scottish M. P.s of all parties met recently and passed a resolution " That this meeting unanimously declares that it will take all steps to unite support for the construction of a Forth-Clyde sea level ship canal as an-essential feature of the Government's plans for post war development." Mr. G. Mathers presided and the meeting was given a comprehensive statement on the subject by Sir John Graham Kerr.

1944-2-9 Liverpool Post
Mid-Scotland Ship Canal
M.P.S TO URGE HASTE

From A Political Correspondent

Scottish M.P.s of all parties, under the chairmanship of Mr. George Mathers, last night agreed to send to the Government a memorandum putting the claims of the projected mid-Scotland ship canal to a position of high priority in the programme of post-war public works. Later, Ministers will be asked to receive an all-party deputation.

The proposed canal starts from Grangemouth and follows a course roughly parallel to the existing barge canal, entering the Clyde near Erskine Ferry. It will be 150 feet wide and 33 feet deep—sufficient to carry ships up to 20,000 tons. It will be filled with sea water and devoid of locks, apart from the sea-gate at each end.

Strategically, the canal would provide access of naval forces in the North Sea to the shipbuilding and ship repairing facilities of the Clyde, Barrow, the Mersey and Belfast: a passage allowing rapid transference of naval vessels from one side of our island to the other; and safety exit for vessels shut in by blockade of the Firth of Forth or by blocking of the channel at Queensferry.

1944-2-10 Journal of Commerce
Forth-Clyde Canal Inquiry
MP and Publication of Report

In the House of Commons yesterday, Major E. G. R. Lloyd (Renfrew. Cons.) asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of War Transport if he was in a position to state when the departmental committee considering the question of a Forth-Clyde ship canal would conclude its deliberations, and whether its report would be published.

Mr. Noel Baker.---I understand the departmental group who are considering the question of a Forth-Clyde canal are now awaiting information which may not be received before the end of February or even later, I cannot therefore predict when their deliberations are likely to end.

Since certain questions of national security may be involved, the Minister of War Transport thinks it wiser to make no decision about the publication of the report until it has been received.

Major Lloyd remarked that there was considerable interest in Scotland in this matter. and there would be a demand for the publication of the report when the time came.

Mr. Noel Baker replied, that he thought the main substance of the case on both sides must be made public, but there might be subjects which should not be disclosed and the Minister considered he should wait until the report was received.

1944-2-12 Journal of Commerce
Mid-Scotland Ship Canal
MPs seek high priority

Scottish M.P.s of all parties have agreed to send to the Government a memorandum putting the claims of the projected Mid-Scotland ship canal to a position of high priority in the programme of post-war public works. Later Ministers will be asked to receive an all-party deputation on the subject.

We urge the construction of the canal primarily on economic grounds, namely, the resultant and much-needed development of industry and trade which will follow its construction in a region Which during recent pre-war years has been sorely hit," says the memorandum.

" The island of Great Britain forms a barrier across one of the great trade routes of the world. The breaching of this barrier by a navigable channel will attract trading vessels by its avoidance of the

stormy seas of the Pentland Firth, its facilities for refuelling and filling up vacant cargo space, and its shortening of steaming distance.

"The importance of this last factor varies with different voyages. In that between Leith and Belfast it has been calculated to be sufficient to increase the possible number of voyages in a three months' period from 17 to 23, which would clearly mean a large increase in the earning power of the individual ship.

1944-2-29 Journal of Commerce

'Mad Wildcat Scheme'

Glasgow Chamber and Mid-Scotland Canal

The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce yesterday turned down the idea of a Mid-Scotland ship canal. "There is plenty of money to be spent in Scotland in improving industry without going into a mad wildcat scheme," said Col. C. J. Hirst, reporting the decision of a committee which considered the scheme. It would probably be a national liability.

The Chamber is to consider the further suggestion to deepen the Clyde above Stockwell Bridge to enable shallow draft vessels to proceed further up the river.

1944-3-2 Journal of Commerce

Rejected Ship Canal Scheme

IT may be expected that we shall hear little more of the mid-Scotland Ship Canal project now that it has been once again rejected by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce. It was at a meeting of the Home Affairs Committee of that Chamber that the project was once again brought up for review, and the previous decision against it was reaffirmed, only one member dissenting. The committee made it quite clear that since its former decision there had been no further developments or changes which would warrant any reversal of opinion on its part. On a previous occasion the report of the Mid-Scotland Ship Canal Committee published in 1930 had been closely studied, and it was agreed that there were no advantages in the scheme to Scottish industry and commerce which would justify the expenditure of so great a sum as that which the construction of the canal would entail. In regard to the question of cost, it was fairly evident that prices of material and costs of labour at present-day levels would put the scheme entirely out of court.

It was admitted that the amount of labour involved would not be so great to-day on account of the probably greater use of mechanical contrivances, but it was the opinion of the committee that much of this labour would have to be imported. Nor would the capital expenditure contemplated end with the construction of the canal, for there would be new villages and towns springing up along its banks, for which there would have to be provided houses, gas, electricity and other amenities, the money for which would be more profitably expended on existing cities and towns. As for the claim that such a canal would have an immense strategic value, the committee decided that that was not a matter with which they were competent to deal—it was for the Admiralty and the Government to say what value they attached to such an undertaking.

Col. C. J. Hirst, who presented the Committee's report, said that plenty of money could be usefully expended in developing industry in Scotland to much better purpose than putting it into a project which he characterised as "a mad, wild-cat canal scheme." Out of more than a score members of the committee only one member supported the idea, and he based his action on strategic grounds. Col. Hirst suggested that some of the money suggested for this object might be more usefully spent in carrying out a plan already existing, for the deepening of the Clyde above Stockwell Bridge, and the removal of the weirs to enable shallow-draft vessels to proceed farther up the river. This was a matter which deserved earnest consideration for the improvement of the navigation of the Clyde would benefit not only shipowners and shipbuilders but bring to the whole district an increased prosperity the effects of which would be widespread.

1944-3-17

Mid-Scotland Ship Canal Project

Scottish MPs and Opponents 'Outbursts'

The Mid-Scotland ship canal project is the subject of a letter in the "Glasgow Herald" from Sir John Graham Kerr, Conservative MP, for Scottish Universities, who writes,—

"Those who believe that the interest of Mid-Scotland and, indeed, of the nation, must take precedence over the narrower interests of keeping things as they are will not be discouraged by outbursts from those who proclaim the coming ship canal to be a 'mad, wild-cat scheme.' Similar ebullitions have, heralded the coming of other ship canals.

"The Suez Canal was on July 7, 1857, proclaimed by the then Prime Minister to be 'an undertaking which in commercial character may be deemed to rank among the many bubble schemes which have from time to time been palmed upon gullible capitalists.'

"The Manchester Ship Canal project was one of the wildest schemes that have ever entered into the mind of man.' It was based upon plausible fallacies, one of the most alluring of which was that factories would spring up 'along its banks.' It 'could never pay.' It was 'as great a delusion as the South Sea Bubble.' It 'would reduce to beggary some 800,000 persons resident within five miles of the Liverpool Exchange.' Manchester would not be a safe port, and they would never allow any of their vessels to enter the canal.'

"What nonsense these pronouncements were has been shown by the course of events. But I would point out that their authors were no mere humble followers of science but hard-headed men of business, comparable in eminence with the members of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce."

1944-4-25

Mid Scotland Ship Canal

Glasgow Chamber Reaffirm Decision

The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce at the quarterly meeting yesterday, reaffirmed a previous decision not to support the projected mid-Scotland ship canal.

Col. N. Kennedy, who presided, recalled that the directors had expressed the opinion that there were no developments or changes of circumstances or conditions since the report by the Mid-Scotland Ship Canal Committee in 1930 justifying then, in recommending that the scheme should now be supported.

Voicing objection to that decision, Mr. L. P. Thomas thought it would be regrettable if the report was published to the world that that was the finding of the chamber. If the scheme were embarked upon it would do more to transform the whole of Scottish life than any other single project.

He moved that the chamber reject their decision and appoint a new committee to reconsider the whole subject, and that the membership thereon be limited to persons of not over 55 years of age.

The amendment only received five votes when put to the meeting, and the chairman declared the minutes carried by an overwhelming majority.