

We cannot see that any such principle as is urged by Mr. Jull is at stake. Parliament in good faith, acting on certain information, gave the power. If Parliament follows our recommendation it will, equally in good faith, and, we submit confidently, on later and much more accurate information, revoke the authority. To our minds the proposition is self-evident that any legislating assembly may and should do so, and we do not propose to labour the point. We do, however, suggest that if the constituents of the Harbour Board are in any way aggrieved, and if the correction of an original mistake proves expensive, the blame would lie neither at the door of the Legislature which originally gave and subsequently revoked the authority, nor at the door of this Commission, which honestly and confidently recommended the repeal of the legislation in question, but at the door of those persons whose actions and words had led their constituents to become supporters of an unsound proposal. If our recommendation to repeal the legislative authority in question is without precedent in this country, we are prepared to stand by it as a better precedent than many that stand crystallized in the form of unjustifiable and unproductive monuments to the unwise expenditure of public money.

PART 16.—ADVISABILITY OF CONSTRUCTING HARBOUR.

The next question submitted is, “Whether, taking into account all relevant considerations, it is advisable that such a harbour be constructed?” We define “constructed” in this connection as meaning “completed or developed.” We have in the immediately preceding paragraph answered that the expenditure of the money necessary to construct the recommended harbour cannot be justified from the financial and economic point of view. We know of no aspects of the whole problem that dominate the financial and economic aspects, and we are therefore of opinion that our answer to this question follows as a matter of course on that given to the immediately preceding question. Our answer is that it is not advisable that such a harbour be constructed now or in the immediate future.

PART 17.—IS THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE SCHEME?

The next question to which we must address ourselves is in the following words: “In view of all the circumstances, is there any other scheme which you can recommend in preference to those mentioned and compared in Part 12 hereof—viz., a completed Inner Harbour scheme or a completed breakwater scheme?”

It seems to us that there are two ways in which we may interpret this question. One way would be to consider the evidence with a view to answering the question, “Is there any harbour scheme quite distinct from the breakwater or Inner Harbour schemes which is worth consideration and can be put forward for recommendation?” A bare reference was made, for instance, on one or two occasions in the course of the evidence to a deep-sea harbour site near Cape Kidnappers; whilst further brief references were made to an Inner Harbour quite distinct from that which we have discussed in our foregoing paragraphs, in that its entrance channel, as to direction and other details, was quite different from that recommended by Messrs. Cullen and Keele. We may briefly dismiss this possible aspect of the question. No such scheme is at the present time so seriously before the Napier Harbour Board or the ratepayers of that Harbour Board’s district as to be considered within the scheme of practical politics; we collected no evidence designed to lead to a conclusion on any such scheme, and we answer that from this point of view we have no recommendation to make.

The question, however, is capable of a second interpretation, which may be stated thus: “Has the Commission any recommendation which it can put forward as an alternative to constructing a complete Breakwater Harbour at the present time?” or, in other words, seeing that the Commission has advised that the construction of the recommended Harbour is not justifiable financially or economically, does the Commission recommend that the harbour district and its elected representatives do nothing?

Our answer to this question, in whichever form it may be taken, is that we recommend that the Harbour Board enter upon a policy of putting its existing facilities into a state of efficiency with a view to procuring the most effective service and the utmost returns from a composite harbour scheme, comprising a roadstead for the largest vessels, the breakwater harbour for such large vessels as require its use, and the Inner Harbour for vessels drawing up to 15 ft.

We are quite satisfied that it is nothing but the unfortunate intrusion of party spirit into the constitution and deliberations of the Board, resulting in a state of settled warfare between parties, that has led to the inner and breakwater portions of Napier Harbour facilities being pitted against each other as rival harbours. We are satisfied that common-sense, business insight, and experience of what is being done in harbour construction and administration in other parts of the world unite in pointing out the Inner and Breakwater Harbours as complementary parts of a comprehensive scheme of harbour operations. In our opinion, the present state of the harbour controversy, with local partisans holding the views that have been put before us with a fervour that may almost be described as fanatical, would be ludicrous if it had not been fraught with such unsatisfactory results to the people of the district.