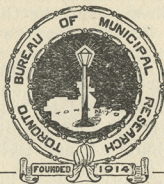


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The "New" Union Station, the Proposed Viaduct, the Harbour Development and the Customs House Situation

From the standpoint of an interested newcomer to Toronto.

LETTER No. 1.

MR. _____
TORONTO.

Dear Sir:— Re "New" Union Station and Proposed Viaduct.

Through the courtesy of the Railway Terminal Officials, I have had the opportunity of going through the New Union Station. Its beauty and the extent of the conveniences and facilities are almost beyond description and quite in contrast to the conditions existing in the Station made use of at present. In the New Station, the steam is on, as it were, and everything is moving at slow speed, waiting for the throttle to be opened to provide for actual operation. The question at once arose in my mind, "Why is this wonderful plant not being used for the purpose intended?" The situation is so unusual that my curiosity impelled me to make some rather careful enquiries, and I am passing on to you the impressions I received as a result.

What is holding up the use of the New Station? The separation of grades along the water front by means of a viaduct has apparently long been a bone of contention between the City and the Railways.

As far back as 1908, the Dominion Railway Commission had issued an order to the Railways to construct a viaduct from Carlaw Ave. to York St., the City to pay one-third of the cost. The Railways appealed from this order of the Railway Board and carried it to the Privy Council without success. They then tried to substitute bridges and sub-ways as a means of grade separation, and a series of meetings were held and the matter discussed by the Toronto Harbour Commissioners, the City, the Railways, and the Chairman of the Board of Railway Commissioners. The Railways apparently abandoned all thought of bridges, and an agreement known as the "Viaduct Agreement" was finally executed on July 29th, 1913. This agreement, which was confirmed by the order of the Dominion Railway Board, defined the route to be taken and provided for the elevation of the tracks across the front of the city. The construction contemplated leaving the present grade at Bathurst St. and meeting it again at Carlaw Avenue. This included, (1) making use of a present bridge at Bathurst St. and the construction of a new overhead bridge at John St.; (2) sub-way street crossings through the viaduct at York St., Bay St., Yonge St., Scott St., Church St., Jarvis St., Parliament St., Trinity St., Cherry St., Eastern Ave., and Queen St. East; and (3) the construction of the New Union Station. It also provided that all properties lying between Yonge St. and Cherry St., south of the railway tracks on the Esplanade are to be acquired by the Railways. Then the Harbour Commission were to have the option of purchasing from the Railways that portion of the land so acquired which is not required for the 230' viaduct right-of-way or the 47' 6" width of street at the south of the viaduct, at a price of one-half the amount paid by the Railways for the whole property, or for only that portion of the land so acquired lying to the south of the right-of-way (and apparently the street area) for one-third of the amount paid by the Railways, as above. Under the order of the Railway Board, work on the viaduct was to be commenced immediately and completed within three years from the date of signing the agreement, and when the construction had been developed to a point satisfactory to the Railway Commission, they were to authorize the opening of the New Station. The Station has been built for some years, but the remainder of the construction seems to be as far away as ever. **You have a magnificent station, but unfortunately not in use, and acres of reclaimed land on the new Harbour front which will be difficult to commercialize until safe and adequate railway crossings are arranged.**

The cost of the proposed viaduct is no small consideration and apparently will bring but little, if any, reduction in operation expense to the Railways. Is it not natural to suppose that the Railways will not want to go on with construction any sooner than necessary, although they are supposed to be fined one hundred dollars for each day's delay? The war gave a justifiable reason for postponing construction, and now through the submission of alternative proposals the strength of the City's demand for action has become weakened by developing differences of opinion as to what is really wanted. **So long as you are divided among yourselves as to just what you**

want, you must expect the Railways to take advantage of the situation and postpone carrying out the proposed work. The problem is something which every citizen should take an interest in. First a decision must be arrived at as to whether or not, after considering all sides of the question, the grade separation is really needed. If needed, then all the various civic organizations should get together, decide upon some definite plan, whether it be the "Viaduct Plan" or the "Bridge Plan," and then, when it has been decided what is wanted, insist as a unit that the work be carried out.

In 1907 the Board of Trade submitted a plan to do away with the dangerous crossings to the water front, and in 1908 the City submitted a scheme calling for track elevation at an estimated expenditure of approximately two million dollars. This plan, on being checked over by other interests, was found to be unsatisfactory and the estimate insufficient. In 1909 the Grand Trunk drew up a so-called Viaduct Plan with an estimated cost at twelve million dollars, exclusive of land costs and estimated damages.

In 1921 a new Viaduct Plan, including many operative improvements over present services, land damages, cost of new station, was submitted at an estimated cost of thirty-four million dollars. When the scheme was presented, apparently the opinion was expressed in some quarters that, inasmuch as the Railways were not disposed to spend money for which they could see no direct return, they were padding the estimates with a view to killing developments. This resulted in a Committee of Engineers representing the various interests concerned going over the estimates in detail, working out unit quantities, and fixing unit costs. The new estimate, which apparently contained every conceivable want in railway facilities, ran even higher than the previous estimate. It is possible that high unit costs were assumed in working up the statement, but there seems to be a feeling amongst many who closely followed developments, that at least one-third of the estimated cost is accounted for by figuring on many improvements in service, perhaps frills, not used to-day, and the cost of which can hardly be termed Viaduct construction cost, and that the actual Viaduct construction cost would be well under twenty millions.

From time to time the Railways have submitted alternative bridge schemes which they may be sincere in putting forward, but it would almost look to an outsider, in view of so much land being required for a bridge scheme, and the difficulty of estimating an approximate cost, that their real object has been to cause differences of opinion to develop among those forces pressing for an immediate start on the work. I may be entirely mistaken about this, but, whatever the motive, the result has been paralyzing division.

The last bridge scheme, submitted February, 1923, provides for five bridges located at Bathurst, Simcoe, Yonge, Jarvis and Parliament Streets. When this was submitted it was pointed out that no consideration had been given to improving the entrance to the Eastern Harbour. With this addition, the estimated cost runs to about

eighteen millions. It is also evident that some of the closed avenues to the water front may later have to be reopened by the construction of additional bridges at great but unknown cost.

The Viaduct Plan is something definite and can be estimated on with a fair degree of accuracy. The difference in estimated costs to date seems to have been due partly to differences in general construction costs from year to year, but chiefly, I believe, to differences in the number of improvements, additional to the present service included in the various estimates. The bridge scheme is, however, so interlocked with present and future land values that it is largely a matter of judgment as to what it would cost. In fact, given in each case the same improvements in service, it would look as if the Viaduct Plan might not only be the more satisfactory but might possibly be carried out at much smaller cost. Why not pick out three reliable contractors capable of handling the proposed work and let them tender on both plans, both designed along the same economical lines, the tenders to be binding if the work were proceeded with? A strong feeling seems to prevail that the price which would be obtained in each case, including all damages, would be much smaller, especially in the case of the Viaduct, than many citizens now think possible. The preparing of such a tender would cost the contractors money, and they should be guaranteed a certain fee providing no contract was awarded.

In March, 1922, a committee from various city organizations met the heads of the Railways and all phases of the proposals were discussed. The situation is again being looked into and a report is expected within a reasonable period.

Aside from the desirability of settling a question which will assist in realizing upon the large capital expenditures made in the Toronto Harbour and Industrial Development, and which will allow the use of the New Station, consideration must be given to the resulting impetus to private developments in the neighbourhood of the Station. One concern alone, it is said, has plans all ready for a building to cost over a million dollars, to be proceeded with as soon as the New Union Station is opened.

Of course, a considerable proportion of the new building is being used for administration and post office and customs purposes; but I do not see how your City can afford to allow the New Union Station to be idle as far as its primary purpose is concerned. Can you?

The present situation gives a very poor impression to a newcomer. Meekness will not secure the opening of the New Union Station.

Yours faithfully,
