

MACKAY HARBOUR

Addresses to Committee

Case For and Against Scheme

Addresses on behalf of the several interests concerned were heard at a formal meeting of the Committee inquiring into the proposal to build a harbour at Mackay at a cost of £800,000.

The following gave addresses: Messrs. J. Mulherrin, a member of the Mackay Harbour Board, A. W. Fadden, M.L.A., who is appearing for the Mackay Harbour Board, and Chamber of Commerce, and J. Condie (Messrs. S. B. Wright and Wright), representing Mackay Sugar Manufacturers' Association, and the Mackay section of the Canegrowers' Council.

The committee comprises Messrs. D. A. Flison (engineer to the Harbours and and Marine Department) as chairman, J. D. Ross, of the State Audit Office (representing the Government), and Mr. C. H. Bagsley (representing the Mackay Chamber of Commerce).

Mr. G. A. Lee is the designer of the scheme.

RAPID PROGRESS OF DISTRICT.

Mr. Mulherrin made a strong plea for the construction of a harbour, which, he said, would be a big factor in the development of Queensland. The rich agricultural district was bound to go rapidly ahead. The reserves were there and only awaited development. The mining was entirely neglected, and the large areas of undeveloped land could not go ahead unless there were proper harbour facilities.

Mr. Mulherrin said that as soon as the district got a normal season, much less a good season, every sugar mill would be working at peak. It was generally recognised that the season this year was the worst for half a century. In spite of this, however, the production of sugar was equal to that of last year.

It had been urged that caution should be adopted in view of the failure at Port Alma and other ports. Mr. Mulherrin explained that Port Alma did not then have the trade, whereas Mackay did possess a large trade that was increasing rapidly. It was essential that the district obtain an opportunity to develop and to take its place on the coast of Queensland. The district was well able to carry its obligations.

Mr. Fadden, M.L.A., associated himself with Mr. Mulherrin's remarks.

CASE AGAINST THE SCHEME.

Mr. J. Condie stated that the present inquiry was probably the most important event in the history of the Mackay Harbour Board. It was an ambitious project, but it would at least be recognised that in spite of divergencies of opinion all parties appearing before the committee had one main object in view—the welfare and prosperity of the Mackay district.

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It was in no spirit of carping criticism or prejudice or unreasoning opposition that the Mackay Sugar Manufacturers' Association and the Mackay district executive of the Canegrowers' Council appeared before this committee to express their strenuous objection to the scheme—an objection, he stressed, which had only been strengthened by the evidence given before the committee.

They, of all the parties before the committee, said Mr. Condie, were vitally affected, because it was from the product of their labours that the Harbour Board derived and expected to derive approximately 80 per cent of its revenue. It was only to be expected, then, that they should require a close and business-like scrutiny of the Harbour Board's scheme.

With so much at stake it was reasonable to demand that, even if the Harbour Board must build "castles in the air," there must be a substantial foundation of fact to support them, and not the shifting sand of super-optimistic conjecture and hope.

The committee is still sitting.