

SPEECH

OF THE

HON. M. CAMERON,

ON THE

INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY.

THURSDAY, May 5th, 1862.

Hon. M. CAMERON, in moving his resolutions on the subject of the Intercolonial Railway, rose and said: Honorable gentlemen,—I have submitted these resolutions because I feel that the House ought not, in justice to itself, to rise without giving some expression of opinion on the subject, inasmuch as it is one lying at the foundation of our future position as a state, our history as a people, and our success as competitors for the great carrying trade of the Western Hemisphere, which the God of nature evidently intended for us, if we have the foresight, the energy, and the unanimity to put our shoulder now to the wheel, and then pray to England to aid us by further extending our great and noble system of railways from Western Canada to the Pacific Ocean. Commercially, this road is of the very first importance. Canada, at present, takes \$5,000,000 of the manufactures of England, or almost four dollars a head, more than the people of the United States took before the Morrill Tariff was passed. Our trade with England, mostly through the United States, is about £10,000,000, subject to their will and their fiscal arrangements; and the same difficulty occurs with our correspondence during six months in the year. It is said that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick get to the amount of half a million sterling of Canadian breadstuffs annually through the United States. The Americans may adopt transit, discriminating or prohibitory, as their policy and necessity may require; they may terminate postal arrangements and throw us back into the ante-railroad age, making us carry our mails overland, in carts or sleighs, to Halifax. We are in every way dependent on them for want of this short connecting link, and I believe the time has come when it should be constructed. Once completed, anti-reciprocal or prohibitory laws will be impossible. No treaty can ever secure for us so much free trade with the United States, as the completion of our railway connection over British soil, with the sea. Its completion will bring all our correspondence, and that of all America, two days nearer Europe. It is

but three hundred and fifty miles to make, and less than three millions, less than we have lent to the Grand Trunk, less than Mason and Slidell cost England in six weeks, less than the Arctic passage cost, would complete the whole, and we have two other Provinces able and willing to bear their quota in this great work. In that valuable and truly statesmanlike document, the report of Lord Durham, from which we had already received so many commercial and political advantages, the subject of the Intercolonial Railway was first broached in these words;—"The completion of any satisfactory communication between Halifax and Quebec would, in fact, produce relations between these Provinces that would render a general union absolutely necessary. Several surveys have proved that a railway the whole way would be perfectly practicable. Indeed, in North America the expense and difficulty of making a Railway bears, by no means, the excessive proportions to those of a common road that it does in Europe. It appears to be the general opinion in the United States that the severe snows and frosts of that continent very slightly impede, and do not prevent the travelling on railroads; and, if I am rightly informed, the Utica Railroad in the Northern part of the State of New York, is used throughout the winter. If this opinion be correct, the formation of a railroad from Halifax to Quebec would entirely avoid some of the leading characteristics of the Canadas. Instead of being shut out from all direct intercourse with England, during half of the year, they would possess a far more speedy and certain communication through the winter than they now possess in summer. The passage from Ireland to Quebec would be a matter of ten or twelve days, and Halifax would be the general port by which a large portion of the trade and all the conveyance of passengers to the whole of British North America would be carried on." During the administration of Sir Robert Peel in 1843, the Home Government caused a survey for a military road to be made by Sir James Alexander and Col. Simmonds, which when nearly completed was abandoned. Again, in 1846, Mr. Gladstone, then Colonial Secretary, organized a

survey for this railroad at the joint expense of the Imperial Government and Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In 1849, the report of Major Robinson and Capt. Henderson was submitted to Parliament. The average cost of roads in Massachusetts is £7,950 sterling, and the greater part of the lands will not require to be purchased, and a more favourable state of the money market now will make a saving of £500 a mile. Halifax is the nearest and best seaport for business with England by at least two days. It is the safest, speediest, and best conveyance for troops, a straight line drawn from Cape Clear in Ireland to New York, and it is therefore the direct route, and the sea voyage may be shortened even to New York by nearly three days; and it has this great object that it will supersede the passage by the gulf. The climate, soil and capabilities of New Brunswick cannot be over-estimated, and the railway would open up an immense and beautiful country to immediate settlement. And, honorable gentlemen, it was with great pleasure that I learned from the newspapers only this morning that steps were being taken to unite Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in one Government, which would reduce their expenditure, elevate their importance and remove much of the difficulty heretofore found in procuring action on this great question. In a political and military point of view the proposed railroad is becoming a necessity. The expense of a war one year would pay for a railway two or three times over. In Nov. 1848, Earl Grey addressed a letter to Lord Elgin with the report of Major Robinson. In replying to this letter Lord Elgin insisted strongly on the importance of the work, and the fact that it could be built for a sum within the estimate of that report. He urged that among the advantages to the Empire which would flow from it, that a smaller military force than, without the road, the protection of the Province required, would be sufficient for that purpose; and he went so far as to say, "I would not hesitate to recommend that an immediate and considerable reduction should take place in the force stationed in Canada in the event of the execution of the Quebec and Halifax Railway being thus determined on;"—and the noble lord ventured this expression because he believed the construction of the road would "tend to raise the Colonists from the despondency into which recent changes in the commercial policy of the Empire has plunged them, to unite the Provinces to one another and to the mother country, and to inspire them with that consciousness of their own strength, and of the value of the connection with Great Britain, which is their best security against aggression." The Legislative Council of New Brunswick, on the 6th January, 1849, passed resolutions declaring the construction of this road to be essential to the maintenance of the connection with the mother country, and pledging £20,000 a year and all ungranted lands within ten miles on either side of the road, and a free right of way. On the 31st March, 1849, the Legislature of Nova

Scotia did the same, and on the 30th May of the same year Canada joined in the offer,—passing a statute which is now the law of the land. On the 25th of April, 1850, New Brunswick again addressed Her Majesty re-affirming the grant. On the 25th of November, 1850, Mr Howe addressed Earl Grey, in a letter of great force, urging the importance of this work. Among other things he said:—"While the nearest land to Europe is British territory—while a harbor almost matchless for security and capacity, invites Englishmen to build up within the empire a fitting rival to the great commercial cities which are rising beyond it, your Lordship will readily comprehend the depth and earnestness of our impatience to be rescued from a position which wounds our pride as British subjects, and is calculated rapidly to generate the belief, that the commanding position of our country is either not understood, or our interests but lightly valued. A very common idea prevails in this country that nearly the whole continent of North America was lost to England at the time of the revolution, and that only a few insignificant and almost worthless provinces remain. This is a great, and if the error extensively prevails, may be a fatal mistake. Great Britain, your lordship is well aware, owns up to this moment one-half of the continent; and, taking the example of Europe to guide us, I believe the best half. Not the best for slavery or for growing cotton and tobacco, but the best for raising men and women, the most congenial to the Northern European, the most provocative of steady industry, and, all things else being equal, the most impregnable and secure." On the 14th February, 1851, Lord Derby, in the House of Lords, ably and eloquently enforced the importance of this work. He estimated largely the importance of the Canadas, but not less the Lower Provinces, from their geographical position and their naval and military capacities; and he expressed his great satisfaction with that policy which in Lord Sydenham's time had induced the Imperial Government to loan its credit to the construction of the great inland works of the Province. On the 31st March, 1852, Mr. Hincks, in a letter addressed to Sir John Pakington, said of this work:—"I have reason to believe that were a line of railway completed from Halifax, and that made the terminus of the voyage of ocean steamers, fully £50,000 per annum might be saved in the Atlantic mail service, independent of the sum now paid to the United States for carrying the Canada mails, a service most unsatisfactorily performed and most extravagantly charged for. Instead of the British mails being carried over the American Railways, it must be obvious that the mails and passengers destined for New York, Boston and other American cities, would be carried over a great section of the Halifax and Quebec line." And the suggestion of Mr. Hincks, hon. gentlemen, is well worthy our consideration. We now pay £104,000 for postal subsidy, and surely it would be better

laid out in the construction of the road, a work which would forever render unnecessary postal subsidies, the encouragement of monopolies, with all their concomitant evils, champagne excursions and other corruptions. The adoption of this suggestion would enable us to complete this great work without imposing additional burdens upon the country, and it would besides yield us much more important results in giving us our mails three days earlier than at present. On the 20th May, 1852, Sir John Pakington, in a despatch to Lord Elgin, said that Her Majesty's Government were not only anxious to act with the most perfect good faith towards the Legislatures and people of the Provinces, and fulfil every just expectation which may have been held out by their predecessors; but they also desired to adopt all measures by which the welfare of the British Colonies in North America can be promoted, as far as they can do so consistently with their duties to the empire at large;—but at the same time intimated that the Government were pledged to the Robinson route. From this time nothing definite was done, until the Duke of Newcastle came in as Colonial Minister and took the question up. But in the meantime the Russian war interfered, and the Colonists nobly set to work themselves. Nova Scotia has made 284 miles. Depending on Sir John Pakington's statement, Canada has made 111 miles from Quebec towards Halifax and 2,000 miles westward, which ultimately will form part of the great highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In 1858, the Hon. John A. Macdonald addressed the Provincial Secretary, intimating that though not successful in England, the completion of the road was a mere question of time. On the 16th August, 1858, both branches of the Canadian Legislature took the question up, and in a series of resolutions set forth the many strong reasons that exist for the performance of the work. On the 5th June, 1858, a very influential meeting was held at the Thatched House Tavern, London, on this subject, whereat resolutions in favor of the work were adopted. On the 14th of the same month a deputation from this meeting waited upon Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, and urged the importance of the work upon him; receiving from him a concurrence in their opinion as to its advantages as "a great natural road." Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton has not changed his views on the subject since. The following letter, which was addressed to a friend of my own, and which I have been permitted to use on this occasion, clearly shows this:—

Buxton, May 3rd, 1862

Copy.

DEAR SIR,—

Allow me to thank you cordially for a letter which cannot but be gratifying to my feelings. Certainly, my first object, when I had the honor to preside at the Colonial Office, was to attach all parts of that vast empire which

our Colonies comprise to the mother country, by all the ties of mutual interests and reciprocal affections.

The importance of the railway line between Halifax and Quebec must be transparent to every clear-sighted politician, and had I remained in office I should certainly have urged upon my colleagues, (I do not doubt successfully), the justice and expediency both for Imperial interests, commercial and military, and for the vindication of the imperial good faith which seems to me indisputably pledged to it some efficient aid, or guarantee the completion of the line. I should willingly have undertaken the responsibility of recommending that aid to Parliament, and I do not think the House of Commons would have refused it when prepared with the authority of Government. In that case the Railway, by this time, would have been nearly, if not wholly, completed.

Traffic begets traffic; railways lead on to railways; and a line once formed to Quebec it would not be long before the resources of British Columbia would, if properly directed and developed, suffice to commence the railway that must ultimately connect the Atlantic and Pacific. That once accomplished, the destinies of British North America seem to me assured.

I shall rejoice to hear that the present Government make a proposal which the Provinces accept. Some time, I conclude, must elapse before their decision can be known, and in that case the question can scarcely come before Parliament this session. A mode of aid accepted by the Colonies would have my most favorable consideration, and I cannot doubt my ready support, whatever might be the administration that proposed it.

Yours truly, and obliged,

(Signed)

E. B. LYTTON.

And the following extract from a letter from George Carr Glyn, Esq., M. P., dated, London, May 7th, 1862, shows how high is the estimate placed upon the work by influential men at home:

"Mr. Barry, Mr. Crawford and I were with the Duke of Newcastle yesterday—he read his despatch to us. I think if the arrangement is completed the Government here will contract for the £3,000,000, which will therefore be obtained at the lowest rate of interest, and Government taking the Colonial security for the interest, this is an advantage."

"The boon held out to the Imperial Government by the first proposal was the free carriage for this country of troops, * * * &c., &c., equal, it was said to £60,000 per annum; their rates, of course, will now be paid by the Government for the use of the line to the Provinces or to the Company; thus in a pecuniary point of view the new proposal will not be a bad one for the Colonies, according to their own statement."

I have many other facts and statistics, honorable gentlemen, which might be produced in illustration of the importance of this work, but as this late period of the session I do not desire to obtrude longer upon your attention. I felt it was necessary to obtain from the Council such an expression of opinion as would strengthen the hands of the Government in any action they might desire to take. I feel that we have a glorious destiny before us as a people. With such a country we could well say *no pent up Utica* is ours. Extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific; containing four millions of square miles, equal to all Russia, without its deserts; with an internal system of navigation unparalleled in the world, granted to us by nature and completed by the native energy of our own people, aided as they were by English credit; a soil as fertile as any on earth—extending from sea to sea; inexhaustible forests of the finest timber; mineral resources of gold, iron, lead, coal, oil, and every other economic mineral and stone; boundless fisheries on seas and lakes; a sea coast of over 5,000 miles; with a climate unsurpassed either in its effects upon health and longevity or on productions of every kind, mineral and vegetable; let us at once embrace the offer of the Duke of Newcastle, so comprehensive and so well advised, and set to work to interest Great Britain, Columbia, Vancouver's Island and the United States, in extending the great railroad there 1,400 miles long, from Western Canada, through the country North and West of Huron and Superior, through the country to the rocky mountains at the vermilion pass, a pass prepared by nature, "suited now for an easy waggon road, gradual ascent up and gradual descent down,"—I quote the words of Captain Palissier,—only about 4,600 feet above the level of the sea, and being the best point for passing that hitherto supposed difficult barrier, in the United States south of 49. The railroad trail passes through 1,200 miles of desert, uncultivated; south, even to the 32nd degree, it is far worse. This is the great fact that forbids the march of improvement or cultivation. Between us and the Pacific lies a fertile country, where Province after Province, equal to either Upper or Lower Canada, may be formed through that territory. Let us take advantage of our blessings in being permitted by Divine Providence, to live in peace. Let us

not seek to lead our youth to war, or to infuse into them a military spirit. Unhappily for them our neighbors across the line are involved in an execrable and unholy war, and are creating a debt of hundreds of millions, a tithe of which would have made the road to the Pacific, half of which would have freed the slaves and enriched the South. But let us take advantage of their misfortune, and by economy, by liberal and free trade legislation, keeping off harbor tolls, port dues, and protective tariffs, encourage importation and reciprocal trade, and I have no fear for the revenue. Let our Minister of Finance still further reduce the duties on tea, sugar, and cottons, and for every farthing he takes off, he will find hundreds of dollars of revenue to flow in. We could import by millions under such a fiscal policy; and our American neighbors must then become our customers. Let there be no envy or jealousy between us, but let them see in us only economy of Government, purity of administration, and freedom without licentiousness. Let it be our study to show that democratic institutions and security, equity and pure administration go hand in hand together. It remains for me, honorable gentlemen, but to remind you that nature has, fortunately for us, made it evident that the shortness of distance, the equality of levels, the character of the soil, the openings in the mountains, the harbors in the Gulf of Georgia on the Pacific, the unsurpassed and incalculable gold-fields of British Columbia, are all so many inducements, that the grand secret so long sought of a passage to the south-west, to Asia, for the trade of China, Japan and California, with their tea, silk, fine ivory and lacquer work, besides cattle and gold, to secure which England has spent her millions of money and many valuable lives, is to be found in railway communication through this Canada of ours to the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca and Vancouver's Island. Your very humble co-laborer has become filled with a desire to see the shores of the Pacific. If I should ever have the honor to address you again, I hope it may be to aid in carrying out, for the honor of Canada and the glory of her future name, the schemes you may hereafter devise to secure what the liberality of England has offered through the despatch of one of her ablest and most reliable statesmen. (Cheers.)

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