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CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 1882.

VOL. 10.—NO. 89.

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### P. E. ISLAND RAILWAY RATES

#### Dr. Muttart's Speech

Mr. MUTTART moved for a statement showing lists of articles on which freight rates had been lowered, with amount of reduction, on the Prince Edward Island Railway, since the year 1878; also, copies of all correspondence relating to further

#### LOWERING OF RATES.

including passenger fares charged on said railway. He said: In making this motion, I may say that, on a former occasion, during the Session of 1880, I introduced a motion somewhat similar to the one now submitted. At that time I ventured to assert that I believed, if freight rates were lowered on the Prince Edward Island Railway, on certain articles, especially agricultural produce, it would not only prove a great advantage and convenience to the people, but would also be a source of constantly increased revenue to the Government. Since then a small reduction has been effected in the Tariff rates on some articles. And what has been the result? In the report of the Minister of Railways, laid before Parliament the other day, we are told, by the superintendent of the Prince Edward Island Railway, that "very considerable reductions were made in freight rates during the year, notably on potatoes and on goods ex steamer Northern Light, nevertheless, THE EARNINGS HAVE SHOWN AN INCREASE." But, apart from the subject of the lowering of rates leading in certain cases, to increased business, and consequently increased receipts, the people of the Island have a right to special consideration in the management of their railway. The Island is essentially agricultural, and, therefore, the first consideration should be to afford the utmost facilities to the farmers in transporting their produce to market. The Island Railway, it will be remembered

#### IS A LOCAL ROAD.

not connecting directly with the railway system of the mainland. Being a surface road, it is by no means a straight one. Consequently, a greater distance is travelled in getting from one point to another than if there were fewer curvatures. Farmers are, therefore, charged, in having their produce carried by rail, for greater mileage than they would otherwise be if the road were straighter. Then again, the road only cost about \$16,000 per mile. These and various other reasons, might be urged in favor of still further reducing freight rates on this road. As regards passenger tariffs on the Island Railway, I certainly think the rates should be lowered. Instead of charging 3 cents per mile, as at present, for first-class passenger fare, the charge should be only 2 cents a mile, and return second-class tickets should be given, as in the case of first-class return tickets. I feel confident that, if the passenger rates were lowered as I have indicated, that the next year's report of the superintendent would be able to say, in regard to passengers, what he has this year stated regarding the result of lowering of freight rates. During the recess, the hon. Minister of Railways, in his official capacity, inspected our Island Railway, and I hope, from his personal knowledge of the road, and of the exceptional requirements of the people of the Island, he will endeavor to carry out their wishes in this respect, by lowering

#### BOTH THE FREIGHT AND PASSENGER RATES ON THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND RAILWAY.

#### Mr. Hackett's Speech.

Mr. HACKETT.—In rising to second the motion of my hon. friend, I desire to say that this question of lowering the rates on the Island Railway is one of GREAT IMPORTANCE to the whole Island. As is well known, and as my hon. friend has stated, the Island Railway cost but a small amount of money in its construction. The people of the Island had begun the construction of the railway before the Island entered into Confederation, and it was intended that the road should be a narrow gauge railway, a surface road, that many curves would be allowed, that the cost of construction would be small, and that consequently freight and passenger rates over that road would also be small. Unfortunately, however, the Local Government had not the fixing of the rates before the Island entered Confederation, after which the Dominion Government assumed the responsibility of running the whole of the road, and of fixing the rates the same as the charge on the Intercolonial Railway. This was considered by the people as very unjust, for the reason I have already stated. There are many short curves on that road, and fixing the rates on the Island road according to mileage, is very much in excess of what it would be on the Intercolonial Railway. This matter was brought to the notice of the Government in 1880, and I am glad to find that the hon. gentleman who now administers the Department of Railways has thought proper to make

#### A REDUCTION

on the carriage of certain articles. The people of the Island are principally agriculturists, and the commodities which they require to send to market are of a bulky and weighty nature, having no very great value. The principal products of the Island are oats and potatoes. These cannot be conveyed over the road at present for more than fifty miles, because it is quite impossible for the farmers to sell their commodities at sufficient prices to enable them to pay the freight of their commodities over more than fifty miles of the railway. It is a well known fact that the fall season on the Island is very short, and that the harvest, with the exception of one or two, close very early, and it is of great importance that the people should move their produce during that short season. To do this they should be allowed to move them to the furthest point, 100 or 200

miles over the railway, but on account of the very high rates charged they are not able to send them more than fifty miles. The consequence is, that many of the products of the Island remain in the hands of the farmers and traders, and they send them by water in the spring. This is a matter that should be considered by the Government. The Island Railway has to compete with water, and carriage by water is much the cheaper, for no part of the Island is more than thirty miles from the water. The Government should lower the rates on these articles so that the farmers can send them over the whole length of the railway, particularly in the fall. With regard to the articles on which rates have been lowered, I have figures to show that an increase has taken place in the transportation of those articles as well as in the revenue. In 1880, when this matter was brought before Parliament, only 34,699 tons of potatoes and roots were sent over the railway. In 1881, after a reduction had been made by the hon. Minister, the very large quantity of 165,223 tons were sent over the road, being an

#### INCREASE OF ABOUT 70,000 TONS.

Although the lowering of the rates was an experiment, still the revenue to the Government was increased by about \$1,000 on that one item alone. Then, with regard to sawn lumber. A though lumber was not one of the commodities of the Island, still a very large quantity is sent over the railway. I was in conversation with a gentleman last summer, who owns a large saw mill, and he told me that last year, for the first time in the history of the railway, he was able, in consequence of the lowering of the rates, to send his lumber 100 miles. I find that, in 1880, only 1,589,442 feet of sawn lumber were sent over the railway; while, in 1881, in consequence of the reduction in rates made by the hon. Minister, there were sent over the railway 2,901,314 feet, or an increase of about 1,400,000 feet of lumber, giving an increased revenue to the Government of about \$1,000 upon that item. Then, with regard to cordwood and tan-bark, in 1880, 1,498 cords were sent over the road; but, in 1881, an increase of 500 cords had taken place, giving an increased revenue of \$400 or \$500, thus establishing clearly the success of the experiment of lowering the rates, which would justify the Minister in making still further reduction in the rates for other articles. The principal commodity of the Island is

#### OATS.

The farmers almost exclusively raise oats, and these have to be sent over the railway late in the fall; but from 1880 down to the present time I regret to say that no reduction has been made in the rate for the carriage of oats. Last fall an attempt was made to increase the rates over a short distance of the railway, and I find that, notwithstanding the great increase of prosperity which has taken place, the quantity of oats carried over the railway has largely fallen off. In 1880, 575,441 bushels of oats were sent over the railway; in 1881, 412,526 bushels were sent over the road, showing a falling off of over 100,000 bushels, while other articles, notably roots, potatoes, lumber and cordwood have largely increased. This shows clearly that the farmers of the country are not able to send their oats over the railway with profit to themselves in consequence of the high rate, and, therefore, they resort to navigation. In 1880, the revenue arising from the carriage of oats was \$12,422.64; in 1881, the revenue was \$8,489.02, showing a falling off of \$4,000 on that item alone. These facts show the necessity of a further reduction of the rates on oats. In fact, we cannot send oats over that railway with any profit for a distance of more than twelve miles. I think it is most important, not only to the people of the Island, but to the Government, to lower the rates. This will increase the revenue, undoubtedly, as has been clearly shown by the articles experimented upon. With regard to the carriage of passengers over the railway, I may say that the accommodation is of very poor description. The railway being a narrow gauge, the cars are quite contracted, and there is not sufficient room even for two passengers on each seat. Still we are charged on that railway the same rates as are charged on the Intercolonial Railway. It is well known to all that, with steel rails and a solid road bed, passengers are carried quite smoothly over the Intercolonial Railway; but on account of the sharp curves and steep grades on the Island Railway, passengers are very much shaken up and disturbed. I trust, therefore, that the Government will view this matter as I do, and will make such reductions in the passenger rates as will meet the views of the Island people. I think the result of the experiment already tried in lowering the rates will justify the Minister in making further reductions.

#### Sir Charles Tupper's Remarks.

Sir Charles Tupper.—There is, of course, no objection to this motion, and the papers moved for by the hon. gentleman will, as a matter of course, be brought down. The subject of this motion will receive the careful consideration of the Government. I will be only too glad to find that, by reducing still further the rates on the Island Railway, the net results will be improved. If that can be shown, and if there is good reason to believe that, by reduction in the rates, we can improve the net results, which, I regret to say, are still very unfavorable, it will be a matter of very great pleasure to me to recommend such a reduction. But it is a well known fact that the people of Prince Edward Island have, perhaps, a larger amount of railway accommodation in proportion to the population than any other people in the world. It is equally well known that it costs a large sum of money to give those railway facilities to the people of Prince Edward Island, and regardless altogether of the cost of the work, the operating expenses of the railway on the Island are still very largely in excess of the net income. Still, of course, I believe

the hon. gentleman is correct in saying that the reduction which has been made has had the effect of decreasing the very large margin that previously existed between revenue and expenditure, and if it were found that by further reductions we could still more decrease the disparity between revenue and expenditure, I shall be only too glad to effect an improvement in the operations of the road by a measure of that kind.

Motion agreed to.

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