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DEBATES OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

(Continued from first page of this week's Examiner.)

Mr. LEWIS.—Mr. Chairman, this question has been so well discussed already, that it is unnecessary for me to occupy much of the time of this Committee with any remarks I may have to offer. I was pleased at seeing the reference in the paragraph to the subject of dredging in our harbors and around our wharves. I have long recognized the great importance of this matter, and I hope we shall soon have a good steam dredge at work. As to the railroad, I am in favor of the introduction of such means of communication. Some may imagine that my opinion is influenced by the fact that I live in Summerside, and my property would be enhanced by the road; but, Sir, such is not the case. If we look beyond the narrow limits of the Island, we find that every country, inhabited by intelligent people, has adopted railroads, and none desiring to dispense with them. The minority have brought no arguments bearing on the subject, except in favor of it. It is a stubborn fact that our neighbors in the States and the Dominion of Canada have built, and are building, great lines of railroad. I was in Saint John, New Brunswick, when the first soil of the first railroad (that between Saint John and Shediac) was cut, and I passed over the line a year or two after it was opened for traffic. At that time I thought it an expensive undertaking, and not likely to do much good to the country. Only two or three first-class passengers got out of the train at Shediac. But, Sir, I have travelled on that line many times since, and have seen the traffic constantly increasing; and it must be a source of pleasure to the Government which constructed it to reflect upon the extent to which their policy has developed the resources of the country. Last year, when I used the line, every passenger car was crowded, and the complaint was general that the accommodation afforded by the line was altogether inadequate to the business of the country which required to be performed. We are here to discuss the question of railroads, and not those of land or religion, and I do not see why those subjects have been introduced. The paragraph does not commit us to any railroad. It merely promises our serious consideration of the subject. I have travelled by rail from Halifax to Truro, in Nova Scotia, and I recollect that large numbers of the people were opposed to the government of the day on their railway policy, and actually turned them out of office on that account. I thought at the time that it was a great mistake that the road did not go to Pictou; but time effects great changes in the ideas of people. Nova Scotia has extended the line to Pictou, and is now bringing all parts of the country into direct railway connection, and is receiving reasonable returns from the lines in operation. We must keep up with the times, and I hope none here will say that we must forever remain as we are at present, without railroads. Sir, have we no resources? Hon. members of the opposition say that our road will cost more than £5000 a mile. If we enter into a contract at that, or a lower price, and take good security for the performance of that work, the contracting party must do the work, and if a loss is sustained, must take it on his own shoulders. My hon. colleague (Mr. MacMillan) is in favor of railroads, and has signed a petition in support of his views. Well, Mr. Chairman, I have signed the same document about two years ago. The soil between St. John and Shediac is, with the exception of a few miles, barren and rocky, and I was surprised to find that, notwithstanding this drawback, the local business of the line was 50 per cent. of the whole, the business of the Island giving 10 per cent. A railroad would open up the country, tend to the establishment of manufactories, and develop many new branches of business. Why, Sir, we know that in the United States, where railway communication is general, fortunes have been made by the trade in the single article of ice of which we certainly have a reasonable quantity, and of a hardness greater than that of our neighbors. The hon. member from Tryon (Mr. Howat) wanted to know what we had to feed a railroad? Why, Mr. Chairman, the wood that is now wasted in clearing wilderness farms, would, if brought to market pay for the land on which it grew, especially if manufactured into hoops, staves, barrels, and other articles. The conveyance of coal, limestone, muselmud, and other articles required in the interior part of the Island, would contribute largely to the business of the road. Great stress has been laid on the probable increase of taxation if we had a railway, but, while it would be wrong to tax a man if he got nothing in exchange for the burden, yet if the tax he pays yields to him a benefit equivalent to, or greater than its amount, I really cannot see the hardship of the case. I expect that nine tenths of the people will get a good return for all they may have to pay for the road. It was stated by the hon. Leader of the Government, that £30,000 would be the interest on the cost of 100 miles of road, but I think we may set down the length of the line at 115 miles. The interest would then be about £34,000 a year. Now, Sir, assuming the road to earn one-half that amount, there surely would be no difficulty in raising the remaining £17,000. If the road is to be paid for by debentures, having 30 years to run, I suppose a sinking fund will be provided; but even if it were not provided for within that period, the credit of the Island will be ample security for an extension of time, and our children will say that their fathers acted wisely, and left to them a fair equivalent for any taxation they may be called upon to pay on account of the railway. I am glad to think that this matter has been brought under our notice, but cannot see what possible connection can be traced between it and Confederation. I have been called a Confederate, for what reason I know not, unless it be that I am in the habit of buying flour from some of the Canadians. I do not think that the Government has any idea of

bringing us into Confederation by building a railway. The hon. member for Tryon says he is in favor of a survey of a line for the railway. What does he mean by that? When he made that statement, he admitted the principle of introducing railways; for, if it is necessary or expedient to survey a line, it is equally necessary and expedient to construct it. Notwithstanding all that hon. member had said about merchants at Summerside clubbing together to keep down the price of oats last fall, and the farmers refusing to sell in consequence, I may tell him that I have been for some years in the habit of buying oats, and that last year especially, the roads were in such a state as to prevent parties from bringing oats to market. The improvement of our roads by macadamization has been referred to, and it has been admitted that it has cost in some cases, as much as £1500 or £2000 a mile. But, if we put the cost at even £1000 a mile, it must certainly be imprudent to spend that sum, when four times that amount would give us a mile of railway. The fact is, that that our soil is too soft to bear heavy carting, and last year I saw 13 or 14 men employed, at one time, near Summerside, in filling up holes and repairing the roads where they had given way. We are better able than most other countries to build a railroad, and if the undertaking should not be adopted this year, the people will be induced to think the matter over, and I do not fear the result, for I believe that, if the House do not act in this matter this year, the people will force it upon our notice next session. It is idle to say that our roads are fit for the heavy hauling required in spring and fall, and that vessels are not detained by that cause. Cascumpec harbor is the best on the western side of the Island but three years ago a vessel of mine lost three weeks in endeavoring to get into that port, and had finally to put into Georgetown to load, while a cargo of oats for her was stored at Cascumpec. A good deal of objection to a railroad in the Island, has arisen from local feelings as to the route. It is true that railroads cannot be carried to every man's property, neither can steamboats call at every man's door upon the coast, but they both pay, and all the population share in the benefits they confer. It is probable that Summerside and Georgetown may receive greater benefits than other parts, but we must look at the general interests of the Island in dealing with a subject of this nature. In the neighboring Provinces, surveys of different routes have been made before Government would decide on which they would take; here the narrowness of the Island renders that course unnecessary. A main trunk, with a few branches, would embrace the whole Island, and I hope Government will extend the benefits of railway communication as far as possible.

Progress reported.

H.

FRIDAY, Feb. 24.

Petitions were received against the return of the Third Electoral District of Prince County, also against the return of the Hon. D. Davies, for Charlottetown and Rtyty, which, having been received and dealt with in the usual manner, were made the order of the day for Monday next.

Hon. Mr. WIGHTMAN asked leave of absence for a few days. Hon. Leader of the Government would be sorry to oppose the request of the hon. member, but thought it advisable that each hon. member should be in his place when the House would go into Committee of Privileges and Elections on the petitions which have been received.

Hon. B. DAVIES and Hon. Mr. MacEachen also thought the hon. member should remain until those questions were disposed of.

House adjourned until three o'clock. G.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Privileges and Elections.

Hon. Leader of the Government said that before moving that the House go into Committee of the whole to consider the petition of W. W. Sullivan, Esq., and others against the return of Hon. F. Kelly and H. Beer, Esq., he would move the following:—

Resolved, That a message be sent to the Legislative Council, requesting that House to permit the Hon. T. H. Haviland, one of the members, to attend and give evidence before the Committee of Privileges and Elections, on the consideration of the Petition of Wm. W. Sullivan and others, complaining of an undue Election and Return for the Third Electoral District of Queen's County.

Before going into Committee, he (Hon. Leader of the Government) would state the practice of the Imperial Parliament in such cases as the one which would come before the Committee. Immediately after going into Committee on Privileges and Elections the Committee were duly sworn to give an impartial decision on the matter to come before them; the Clerk was also sworn. The practice was to investigate the subject with closed doors; and he thought that all deliberations of that kind should be done with closed doors, because it was not necessary to report the individual opinions of members on their oath. He presumed that all the members of the House were satisfied to conform with the rules of the Imperial Parliament, in reference to the subject to come before them. No witness was allowed to be present when another witness was being examined by the Committee.

Hon. ATTY. GENERAL said that the authority quoted by the Hon. Leader of the Government was a correct one. The practice had hitherto been to discuss such matters with open doors; and it would be understood that the Hon. Leader of the Government was not particular what course the House might adopt in reference to it. As far as he (Hon. Atty. General) was concerned, it made no difference which rule was adopted. The Committee would act as judges on the matter which would come before them.

Hon. Mr. WIGHTMAN asked if the sitting members for the Third District of Queen's County would retain their seats on the Committee while the case was being decided; for there was a distinct rule on the matter, which stated that hon. members who were concerned in such a case shall retain their seats only during the introductory debate, while the evidence was being taken, and not while the case was being considered. He did not think the petition would affect Hon. Mr. Kelly at all, but the returns were one and the same, and therefore, both of the sitting members should be governed by the rules of Parliament.

A message was received from the Legislative Council, through their Clerk, to the effect that leave had been given the Hon. Ccl. Secretary to attend and give evidence before the Committee of Privileges and Elections.

Hon. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT stated that as neither of the hon. members for the Third District of Queen's County had a vote on the Committee, they would both retire while the matter was being considered.

Hon. Mr. DUNCAN obtained leave of absence, on account of illness for one day.

The House then resolved itself into a Committee of the whole on Privileges and Elections, to take into consideration the petition of W. W. Sullivan, Esq., and others, against the return of Hon. F. Kelly and H. Beer, Esq., members for the Third Electoral District of Queen's County.

W. W. Sullivan, Esq., appeared at the Bar of the House as Counsel for the petitioners against the return of Hon. F. Kelly and H. Beer, members for the Third District of Queen's County, and addressed the Committee on the allegations set forth in the petition. Several witnesses were also examined. After some time spent in Committee, the Speaker took the Chair, the Chairman reported progress and obtained leave to sit again.

House adjourned till ten o'clock to-morrow. I. O.

SATURDAY, February 25th.

On motion of the Hon. Leader of the Government, the House resolved itself into a Committee of Privileges and Elections. Having spent some time therein, House resumed, progress was reported, and leave given to sit again.

Adjourned for one hour. G.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Hon. Mr. WIGHTMAN obtained leave of absence for two days.

House in Committee on Draft Address.

Mr. A. C. McDonald in the Chair.

The eleventh paragraph, relating to the expediency of the construction of a railroad, was read.

Mr. HOWAT did not disprove of railroads, but he would oppose their construction by the Government. If a company would undertake the work, he would not oppose a grant from the public funds to assist them. In countries of vast extent, like the United States, railroads were a necessity, and all the roads in that country had been constructed by companies. As the railway question had not been once named at the last Election, and as the building of a railroad would cause the levying of enormous taxes upon the people, the House would not, at the present time, be justified in forcing it upon the country. He had heard of some parts being in favor of it but believed that by taking the whole Island, a considerable majority of the people were strongly opposed to its being undertaken by the Government. The matter should at least, be laid over till the next meeting of the Legislature, in order that the people's views might be more correctly ascertained in reference to it. The question had been brought before the House without a moment's warning, so that there had not been time to discuss it as its merits deserved. He was of opinion that the extent of the trade of the country would not warrant the undertaking of so vast and expensive a work. He had asked a mail-carrier, to the west of Summerside, what the average number of passengers conveyed by him was, and was answered that it was only one passenger per week. If the people of the western part of the Island were twenty years behind Bejeque, as regards improvement and prosperity—and he believed they were—he saw no reason to justify any Government in carrying out so vast an undertaking. Even the trade between Charlottetown and Summerside was not sufficient to keep a railway properly employed. After the fall shipments were over, there would be scarcely anything left for the railway to carry, for it was only occasionally that farmers ever travelled far from home.

Hon. Mr. PERRY said there was no doubt that people who lived far from harbors would receive the greatest benefit from a railroad; but it was unfair for hon. members, whose constituents had received large sums for dredging and other public works, to oppose the construction of a railway that would benefit those who lived in the interior, and did not enjoy the direct advantages of good harbors, wharves, &c. People who lived far from shipping places should not be denied an opportunity to improve their condition any more than those who lived near navigable rivers and good harbors. He had attended two meetings in the First District of Prince County, and found that the people there were fully prepared to support the building of a railroad, and to be taxed for the cost of its construction. The people there were in earnest, and desired ways and means to develop their resources. If the whole Revenue of the Colony were spent in macadamizing the common roads, the means of transport would not then be up to the requirements of the country. He had attended a meeting in Raticoe the other evening, and found that the majority of the people were opposed to a railway, because they lived near a pretty good harbor, where they could ship their produce. The people had come to the meeting determined to oppose the railroad, and would not listen to any party who spoke in favor of it; but there was no doubt the people of the back settlements would allow their representatives to take up the subject and ascertain what the cost of building it would be. When the question of constructing railways was first agitated in other countries, it had always met with the most violent opposition, but after a time the people discovered that the advantages which they derived from railroads were indispensable. It was beyond a doubt that a railway would be one of the best means of developing the resources of such a country as this, where there was such a large quantity of wood to be sent to market, and such vast quantities of limestone imported for the use of farmers who lived far from harbors and shipping places. If our farmers enjoyed the advantage of a railway, their property would, he believed, increase in value 100 per cent. They would thus be in a better position to pay their taxes, and the Colony would derive a larger revenue. He did not suppose it would lessen the expenditure on our public roads to any extent, for if thousands of pounds were spent upon them every year, they would not be good after all. Many parts of the Island were far from beds of mussel-mud and other kinds of manure, but, with the advantages of a railroad, it might be transported to those interior districts for the purpose of enriching the farms. Without this means of conveyance farmers would, in many cases, be obliged to haul manure ten or fifteen miles, or do without it, to the impoverishment of their farms. The hon. member for Tryon had stated that to the westward of Summerside the mail-carrier had, on the average, only one passenger per week. He (Hon. Mr. P.) did