

AFTER RECESS

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER moved the reception of the report of the Committee of the Whole on certain resolutions respecting the admission of British Columbia into Union with Canada.

Mr. MACKENZIE said that in the speech of the Hon. Minister of Militia, the statement had been made that one-third of the land in British Columbia was fit for agriculture. But it was admitted that this statement embraced the Island of Vancouver. Now, in dealing with this question, the Island must not be taken into consideration at all. From all the evidence he could obtain respecting the main land, not one-fifth of it was available for settlement by farmers, and the remaining four-fifths through which the road was likely to run, had yet to be proved good for mining purposes. It was simply absurd to put the price of that land at \$1 dollar per acre. The Hon. Minister of Customs, in his speech the other evening, had advocated entering into an obligation which he could not say the country would be able to perform. It had been said the other evening over and over again during the debate, that he (Mr. Mackenzie) had stated that he regarded the construction of the Pacific Railway as a pressing political necessity. He denied having made any such a statement. He would admit, however, that he would be willing to subject the country to some inconvenience in order to obtain communication with the Pacific through Canadian territory. He was in favour of opening up communication immediately through the country lying between the head of Lake Superior and Red River. From that point to the Rocky Mountains the way was comparatively easy and quite clear enough for the use of emigrants passing into the North West country. On the Pacific slope, there was no doubt that it would be necessary to expend large sums of money from time to time as the Financial condition of the Dominion permitted in opening up a good route to this side of the Rocky Mountains.

But this country should not be bound to construct, within so short a time, such a gigantic work. The Grand Trunk had never yet paid one per cent on the capital expended on it, though passing through a well peopled country and having no scarcity of traffic, yet the hon. gentlemen opposite wished to lead the House to believe that this Pacific Railway which was to run for 2,500 miles through an uninhabited wilderness, would be a paying enterprise. We had unfortunately 200 mile lying between the head of Lake Superior and Winnipeg, which was an uninhabitable desert. Now, he would recommend a cheap narrow gauge railway with steamers on the smaller lakes, as the proper means of communication with the open prairie extending west of Fort Garry and through which it would be unnecessary to construct a road for years to come. He considered this attempt as one of the most foolish things that could be imagined—and what was it for? In order to get some 10,000 people into the Union, they were actually agreeing to pay \$10,000 a head on their account.

Such terms argued either insane recklessness on the part of the Government and their supporters, or a painful want of patriotism, which would damage the country and the character of the hon. Minister of Militia. For thirty years to come it would be unnecessary to construct the greater portion of this line. The only part of the road which would need to be constructed immediately was in British Columbia itself. He would be prepared to consider that as soon as estimates of the cost, &c., should be submitted to this House. Holding these views, he moved that all the words after “that” be omitted, and the following inserted: “having regard to the vast importance of the questions involved in the said Resolutions, (including the obligation to construct within ten years the Pacific Railway, the cost of which is estimated to exceed one hundred millions of dollars), time should be afforded to the people and their representatives for consultation before coming to a final decision; and that the consideration of the said Resolutions should, therefore, be postponed to the next Session.”

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER said that he had hoped after the discussion of the last three days all the arguments against this measure would have been exhausted, and that he would not be called upon to speak again. But after the remarks just made by the hon. member for Lambton, he felt called upon to make some reply. He was willing to give credit to the hon. members who opposed this measure, for sincerity. He (Hon. Sir George-É. Cartier) was much surprised, at the line of argument which they had followed. He was surprised that the member for Lambton should try to meet such a great question on the mere ground of cost. He admitted that the Union was a necessity and that the railway also was a necessity, but the honorable gentleman objected to be tied down to a specified time. He objected to being bound to build a line of 2,500 miles in ten years—but in past years even when the country was new and with comparatively few resources she had built 2,000 miles in eight years. Had Canada been ruined by those works, had her agricultural interests suffered on this account. And in addition to this, Canada had built the Victoria Bridge at Montreal, itself equal to 500 miles of railway, and other large bridges in different parts of the country. Had she suffered from building those works? No.

It was true that the G.T.R. proprietors were not receiving so good a return as he would like. If the railway was practicable at all, every one would admit that it could well be built in ten years. If there had been any complaint it should have been that the time allowed was too long. When it had been proposed to extend the Customs Laws of Canada to Manitoba, it had been objected to as unfair, and that the people of that country were beyond the circle of Canada, and therefore a delay of three years had been allowed until the countries could be more effectively joined and connected. Let the member for Lambton and his friends read their speeches on the North West question. Then no expense was too great, no haste too much, no trouble too great, if only the North West could be acquired, but now they said don't go so fast. He wanted to get hold of the Red River country at any cost, and now from the very same mouth that had spoken of the fertility of the North West, they heard the very opposite. He had then been willing to send any number of men to obtain possession of the country.