

April 25, 1872

Great Western, the Ohio and Mississippi, and the Erie Railways, as instances of the great good resulting from the broad gauge having been changed. It was almost universally admitted that the narrow gauge would have to be ultimately adopted, and therefore the sooner it was done the better.

He had listened with great attention to the Minister of Public Works (Hon. Mr. Langevin), who had made out a very good case and had almost convinced him, but still he thought it would be best to meet the matter at once. He had heard that what rolling stock had been constructed, had been done in such a way that it could be adapted to the narrow gauge with very little expense, and if such was the case a great difficulty would be removed. He believed on good authority that the great weight of the cars and locomotive used on the Grand Trunk occasioned immense wear and tear, and he believed the delays and accidents now so frequent would be to a great extent avoided under a narrow gauge system.

He trusted the question would receive the careful consideration of the House, and though serious expenditure might be involved, yet he understood only some twenty miles of line had yet been laid. If the line were to form a part in a continuous system from Halifax to Vancouver Island, the gauge must be narrow.

Mr. MAGILL said that the narrow gauge had almost carried in the House last Session, and the member for Grenville (Mr. Shanly) now stated it to be the gauge of the continent, and this being so he considered it would be much easier to change now when the road was only partially constructed than when it should be completed. He also referred to the Great Western as an argument in favor of narrow gauge. He hoped the Government would not be frightened at the expense, but would yield to the imperative desire of the country. It was comparatively a small matter to use a narrow gauge. The Grand Trunk would change theirs if they could, and the time would arrive when they would do so. He hoped the motion would pass.

Hon. Mr. HOWE admitted that the argument of the member for Grenville (Mr. Shanly) in favor of narrow gauge was unanswerable, and if there were no difficulties there would be no difference of opinion, but a change in the gauge of the Intercolonial would be a gross breach of faith and honor with the Maritime Provinces. In those Provinces, the roads were broad gauge, and a different gauge on the Intercolonial would deprive Nova Scotia and New Brunswick of all benefit from that line.

Mr. BOLTON thought the importance of the matter justified a full discussion. He had listened with great pleasure to the statement of the Minister of Public Works (Hon. Mr. Langevin), whose arguments were very strong and almost convincing,—but that hon. gentleman had overlooked the value of the Railway connection between Halifax and the United States. It was only a question of time as to the broad gauge lines being narrowed, and before the Intercolonial was complete there would be a narrow gauge line into St. John. The broad gauge stock constructed for the Intercolonial

could very well be used on the present broad gauge line, and he should therefore support the motion on the ground of economy as well as expediency.

Mr. STREET thought it unfortunate that the narrow gauge had not been adopted in the first instances of Railway construction, but he did not see how it would be possible with prudence to disturb the gauge of the Intercolonial, considering the great difficulties in the way of doing so. Contracts were already heavy, and the Government would have to keep them no matter what advantage there might be in a change,—then a very large expenditure would be necessary to change the gauge of the roads in the Lower Provinces, and he did not think they should be prepared to throw upon the country the great burden of these expenses. The Grand Trunk would have to form a portion of the communication, and there was no reason to believe that that Company would change their gauge, for their means would not admit of their doing so; and certainly he did not think Parliament was prepared to help them to do so. For these reasons he was not in favor of the motion.

Mr. WALSH said the question presented itself to his mind in two aspects—convenience and economy. Most of the gentlemen who had spoken had referred to the great advantage of lines connecting with each other having a uniform gauge, and consequently he thought the Intercolonial should be uniform in gauge with those lines with which it connected. It connected at every point with broad gauge lines, and therefore on the ground of convenience it also should be broad. It had also been forcibly pointed out that if the Intercolonial were broad gauge the Lower Provinces would have a uniform gauge from east to west, whereas otherwise there would have to be a breakage at each end of the Intercolonial, and therefore, on the ground of convenience, the broad gauge should be adhered to.

As to the question of economy the House would remember that the contracts had been let out on the principle of lump sums, and therefore, as the contractor would be entitled to that lump sum whether a broad or narrow line were built, a change would not save one dollar on the contracts. Then, again, a large number of platform and box cars had been constructed which could not be changed, and therefore a change would involve the loss of the whole cost of their construction. As to locomotives, forty were under contract; but after the vote of last year, instructions had been given that they should be so built as to be capable of change when necessary. He considered, under these circumstances, that they would not consult the convenience of the trade and commerce of the country by changing the gauge at the present time, while nothing would be saved in constructing the line, but the additional cost of changing the stock would be incurred.

Taking into account the character of the country through which the line would pass, and the obstacles it would encounter in winter, he could not admit that the narrow gauge would be the more suitable. He referred to the fact that during the past winter the St. Lawrence and Ottawa, a narrow gauge line, had often been blocked