

# COPIES

OF

CORRESPONDENCE between the COLONIAL OFFICE and the HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY since 1st January 1862, relative to a ROAD AND TELEGRAPH to British Columbia, and the Transfer of the Rights of the Hudson's Bay Company to other Parties.

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No. 1.

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COPY of a LETTER from H. H. BERENS, Esq., to his Grace the Duke of  
NEWCASTLE, K.G.

MY LORD DUKE,

Hudson's Bay House, London, May 19, 1862.

I HAVE the honour to enclose, for your Grace's information, copy of a correspondence that has passed between Mr. Charles Alleyn, Secretary to the Government of Canada, and Mr. Dallas, who has lately succeeded Sir George Simpson in the government of the Hudson's Bay Territory in North America, on the subject of a proposed road and line of telegraphic communication between Canada and the gold regions of British Columbia.

I take the liberty of forwarding this correspondence to your Grace, because my colleagues agree with me that any negotiation on the subject should be carried on, not with the Colonial Authorities, but with Her Majesty's Government in this country.

The Canadian Government propose, in the first instance, to establish steam communication on Lake Superior, and to open up roads from Fort William in the direction of Red River; and they appear to consider that it is the duty of the Hudson's Bay Company to undertake the further prosecution of the work through their territories. Of course there is no difficulty as far as steamers on Lake Superior are concerned; but between Fort William and the heights of land, the natural difficulties of the country will make road-making a very expensive business; while the soil, which consists chiefly of rock and swamps, will offer no inducement to settlers, even if they obtain the land for nothing.

Within the last few years a considerable sum of money has been granted and expended by the Canadian Government for the purpose of opening this route; but I am not aware that there has been any practical result. Beyond Red River to the base of the Rocky Mountains, the line will pass through a vast desert, in some places without wood or water, exposed to the incursions of roving bands of Indians, and entirely destitute of any means of subsistence for emigrants, save herds of buffalo, which roam at large through the plains, and whose presence on any particular portion of these prairies can never be reckoned on. These again are followed up by Indians in pursuit of food, whose hostility will expose travellers to the greatest danger.

With regard to the establishment of a telegraphic communication, it is scarcely necessary to point at the prairie fires, the depredation of natives, and the general chapter of accidents, as presenting almost insurmountable obstacles to its success.

I have thought it my duty thus slightly to sketch the difficulties in the way of the enterprise, the subject of the correspondence which I have brought under your Grace's notice. But if it be thought that the interests of Canada and British Columbia, or of this country, require that the experiment should be made, the Hudson's Bay Company will most readily acquiesce in the decision of Her Majesty's Government. At the same time it is my duty to state that, in justice to our proprietors, the Directors of the Hudson's Bay Company cannot risk their capital in doubtful undertakings of this description, spread over such vast distances through a country where the means of maintaining them, if once made, will lead to an expenditure scarcely to be contemplated. Although, therefore, the Directors, on behalf of the Company, are ready to lend Her Majesty's Government all the moral support and assistance in their power, it must be distinctly understood that the Company have no means at their disposal beyond those employed in carrying on their trade, and cannot consequently undertake any outlay in connexion with the schemes suggested by the Canadian Government.

I think it may not be improper to take this opportunity of referring your Grace to former communications between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Colonial Office on the subject of settlement in their territories. The Company have always expressed their