

Hon. C. W. Cross' Speech in the A. & G. W. Agreement Debate

A verbatim report of Hon. C. W. Cross' speech in the Alberta and Great Waterways agreement debate.

Mr. Cross moves his resolution and Cross takes up the challenge.

Mr. Cross.—Mr. Speaker I regret but reciprocate the feelings of regret with which the honorable member for Sturgeon has expressed himself as having, after a number of years of political fighting together having to political company, and I trust that the junior member for Calgary will permit me to congratulate him upon the accession to his ranks in the person of the member for Sturgeon, (Mr. Boyle). I also congratulate the Conservative party in this province, the Tory party of this province, on the acquisition of a member of this legislature such as the honorable member for Sturgeon (Mr. Boyle).

Now Mr. Speaker we have had during the last ten or twelve days time a good deal of discussion carried on in various rooms and hotel lobbies in this city regarding this Alberta and Great Waterways railway transaction. I for one am glad indeed to have this opportunity of discussing this matter openly and frankly and candidly with the people of this province, with the members of this legislature, and particularly with my friend, the honorable ex-minister of Public Works (Mr. Cushing) and the member for Sturgeon (Mr. Boyle) who sit in their places just behind me in this House.

Now sir in order to discuss the matter intelligently before the legislature today, in order to deal with it as it should be dealt with, we have to go back in the history of this fair province to the condition of affairs which existed at, and previous to the time the government of the province made the arrangement which we have made with the Alberta and Great Waterways people and with the other railway companies. You have only to carry your memory back a year and a half or two years when we, in this province, were suffering from the financial panic which had occurred in Eastern Canada, and in the eastern United States. To read the history of this western country and through no fault of ours we were suffering from that financial panic. The government of this province, looking to the welfare of the people of this province, and the prosperity of every one in this province, decided if that condition of affairs which was then existing in Alberta was allowed to continue in the future, we would be a government that the people of this province, might see that opportunity and vote as I do, and I say quite properly.

Review of Conditions.

To continue, Mr. Speaker, I ask what was the condition of affairs in connection with this province at that time? Take the northern part of the province, with which I am perhaps more familiar than the other portions (I trust the members of this legislature, and the southern members in particular will pardon me if I refer more particularly to the city of Edmonton and the northern country at the present moment), and see what was the condition of affairs in connection with transportation matters here. We had the C.N.R. running from Lloydminster to Edmonton, and the C. & P. running from Calgary to Edmonton. These were the only railways that we had at that time. Thousands and thousands of people were coming into the country to settle on the land, and still we had plenty of free land unoccupied. While we were advertising in all parts of the world for people to come here and join in the development of this great country, and while we had plenty of free lands we could not get the settlers on the land because of the lack of railway facilities. When a man came to Edmonton or any northern part of the province, what was the conditions which he faced if he wished to find a free homestead. He had to go, not fifty, not sixty, not even seventy miles out, but 100 miles from this city in order to get a free homestead, and travel that distance without railway assistance. We were as a government to allow that condition of affairs to exist any longer than we had to, or any longer than did.

Southern Alberta Suffered. That was the condition of affairs in this great northern part of Alberta. Thousands and thousands of free acres of homestead land, the Dominion government bringing thousands of dollars to spend people to this country, and when they came they had to go away again because of the lack of railway facilities. Sir! What was the position of affairs in southern Alberta? In that part of the country for three years previously they had been growing tremendous crops, and I as a member of the legislature and a citizen of Edmonton most truly I was delighted, as everyone in the northern part was delighted, to see the excellent crops these people were having during those years. While their granaries were filled, their elevators were filled, there were no cars in that country to haul out the wheat. The result was that agricultural business was being sacrificed because of the lack of railway facilities. My friend, the honorable member for Claresholm (Mr. McKenzie) urged upon the government at that time the necessity of securing cars from the C.P.R. to haul out the wheat from Claresholm, Nanaimo and other towns from Calgary to Marmora, and we appointed a special officer to get after the C.P.R. and to bring cars to that town in order to get the wheat out. The town of Claresholm had more wheat that year in its granaries than any grain town in Western Canada. It was the first year that Alberta had shown to the world its capability in the way of growing wheat. Mr. Speaker, that was the condition of affairs the government faced one and a half or two years ago.

Railways Hard to Secure.

My honorable friend from Sturgeon (Mr. Boyle) talks as if railways were easy to build, talks as if people from all parts of the world were tumbling into this country to build railways, but I want to say that I have lived in Edmonton for eleven years and during the first eight or nine years of that time, every citizen was asking "When are we to get more railroads?" I ask were the railroads coming, were their capitalists coming in to build railroads. No! There were actually no railroads in a large part of this country during those years. Before our government took any action in connection with bringing railways into this country, the premier went to Mr. William Whyte, the vice-president of the C.P.R., and urged him the necessity of building railways, and I say he was willing to build railways in this province of Alberta, for he is a man who has always had great confidence in the Western provinces, and he was unable to secure the assistance of his company in building railways throughout this country, and so, we as a government decided as a matter of settled policy that we must adopt an aggressive policy of railway building; if the condition of stagnation was to be abolished. And I say to the members of this legislature that the fact of our now having a time of prosperity and progress here today, is largely due to the aggressive railway policy of the Rutherford government as adopted before the last election, and since carried into effect. Delegations were coming to us from all over the province to call for railroads. Everywhere the cry was for railroads. The C. P. R. was practically alone in this country, and some thought would have to be done if that condition of affairs was not to be continued to the future. I want to point out in connection with this Alberta and Great Waterways railway fact, which I think is undisputed, and that is, that the south of this river running just past our doors, the province today, this railway, has run through and tap a country full of free homesteads, and our government, if we were to do only what is right and proper, had to open up a new country, if our province was to progress as we wished it.

Gentlemen, we as a government led by the premier of this province went to the country for their endorsement in March 1908, and if ever there was an issue presented to any people of any country or province, that issue of railways was put before the people in most unmistakable terms. They were asked to send you to the legislature because you believed in the Rutherford administration and use the Rutherford policy in connection with railways. I stood on platforms in this province, and in the city of Edmonton with my friend, the co-member for this city (Mr. McDougall), and we said to the people of Edmonton that if the railway policy of the government was carried out, in five years time, it would not be a city of 24,000 or 25,000 people, but a city of 75,000 people, and we said not only that, but that in five years time this province would have a million people instead of the paltry 300,000 we are at present time. And I for one am just as firmly convinced as I was at the time we made these statements, that this prediction will come true, just as much if we were to carry out the Rutherford policy. (Applause.)

Mineral Wealth of North.

How, Mr. Speaker, let me again refer for a short time to this northern part of the province, and I want to say here that I believe the members from the southern part of the province are just as much interested to have just as much good faith; have just as much desire that this country should advance as we have here. If I refer briefly to that part of the country, and speak in connection with it, North of the city of Edmonton, after you get a hundred miles from here, there are practically no homesteads taken, all that acre of land is practically open for homesteading. The old and even numbered sections of that country are both open. The C.P.R., as you all know, is a great part of this province; own very large tracts of it, and until their land was sold, development was naturally retarded. But this northern part, in the part through which the Alberta and Great Waterways railway goes, all the land is open for homesteading. There are no odd or even numbered sections as far as homesteads are concerned. A man can homestead upon either an odd or an even numbered section as he sees fit. The result of that is, that on the opening up of this vast country there will be a rush to it, such as we have never seen in this province before, if I am not very, very much mistaken. Some people have been in the habit of attempting to depreciate the mineral possibilities of this northern country. I want to say that I have lived here a number of years, and I have had absolute proof of the mineral wealth of that country. There is oil and gas, and there is asphalt, and I believe that the oil fields are superior to those of California. There are mountains of salt, and of copper, and great prospects of different kinds of minerals being found, because the country north of Fort McMurray is a country simply by exactly to what is known as the Co. salt country in northern Ontario. The mountains, the Laurentians, the Adirondacks, the Laurentians, the Laurentians, and I believe that in the northern part of this province we will have a mineral development such as has never been seen in the whole of the Dominion, and I assert again that it was the plain duty of the government having these vast

natural resources in that country, and having the absolute confidence that we had in that country, to encourage a railway company to come and build into that territory. We are not entirely basing our knowledge of minerals in that country on stories told us by settlers, who live there, although we have proof, everyone in Edmonton knows of people who have come from that country and told them of its mineral riches; but the geological reports of scientists who have been in that country, try to verify the statements of these people who have lived there many years.

A New Empire.

Let me deal very shortly with a country which this railway will tap when it reaches Fort McMurray. It reaches, and will open up practically a new province; a new empire. I believe as one of the members of this legislature said to me the other day, that not only is the undertaking an undertaking of vast benefit to the province, of great provincial importance, but also of great national importance. We who have lived in Canada for years, who were born in Canada, another the days when the people of the United States referred to Canada as a narrow strip of country lying to the north of their boundary, I as a Canadian am proud of Alberta, because of the fact that here we are sitting in the capital of this province, three hundred and fifty miles north of the boundary line, and you have a country three hundred and fifty miles still further north. They call it just as good grain 350 miles to the north of us as they can 350 miles south of us. And I say it makes any one proud to belong to a country such as Alberta is, and will be in the future. (Applause, and hear, hear.) In this province of Alberta to the north of us, we have a place; not a town now, but what will be a town, may I say, a city in the near future, named after you, Mr. Speaker, and it may be of passing interest to inform you that Fort Smith is a seaport town. Ocean ships can go up the Mackenzie river from the Arctic Ocean right to Fort Smith, and as soon as the Great Waterways railway is built to Fort McMurray, there will be navigation for vessels for over a thousand five hundred miles. That river takes a greater country than the Mackenzie river, and it is in extent something like one million, one hundred thousand square miles. It is what is known as the great Mackenzie watershed. After you get north of Edmonton about 55 miles, instead of the water flowing to the south it flows to the north, and so you get into the Mackenzie watershed.

Timber in the North.

The only timber in this province of real commercial value is in its northern part, and there we have timber, just as good as in the sister province of British Columbia. I want to say that of that northern country, there comes in value of fur, something like one million dollars. Last year I understand there was much more than a million dollars worth of fur taken out of this country by the traders. All of that vast area of agricultural land, all that vast area of mineral land will be made accessible to the people in this province if the Great Waterways railway is built, as I am certain it will be built. I am only referring to these matters, gentlemen, to show you the attitude of the government when we came to deal with the Great Waterways railway. To my mind, the most outstanding features of the Great Waterways railway are, that it is a colonization road, and it was built by the government in the manner in which we did. We did not build it as a government went to the C.P.R. and asked them to build railways in this province, their answer was that they were building their main line, and would have great difficulty in doing much more. We went to the C.N.R. and you know what they have been doing in the sister provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba; Saskatchewan especially, and they promised to help us, so that we could get the position of dealing exclusively with the C.N.R. and the Great Waterways railway, and I am betraying no confidence when I say that it was only a very short time before legislation in the House, that the Grand Trunk Pacific consented to build branch lines which we asked them to build, and which are now being built.

Come to Invest Money.

Mr. Clarke and his associates, or at least the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway company came to Alberta largely because they were Americans who had seen the same kind of development in their own country, as they expected, and as we all expect to see here. We are a welcoming province, and thousands of Americans into this province, and we expect to get thousands and thousands more, and I say there is no better class of citizens coming to this province than the good American citizen we get from across the line. We speak the same language; we read the same books, we study the same kind of literature; we have the same love of law and order, and I believe myself that they will make as good citizens for this country, and as good British subjects as any class of immigrants that could get. (Applause.) And I am not inclined, neither were the members of the government to discourage the Great Waterways people simply because they happen to come from Kansas City, or happened to come from the United States. (Hear, hear, from some honorable members.) Still, my honorable friend, the member for Sturgeon (Mr. Boyle) seems to take great exception to the fact that these gentlemen are Americans, and from Kansas City.

Mr. Boyle—No, No! I like Kansas City very much. (Laughter.)

Mr. Cross—Your arguments didn't show it, just the same.

New System Also.

Mr. Cross continuing: Now not only is this a colonization road, but it is also an entirely new railway system, and a great deal of the opposition to this road is due to the fact that it is an entirely new system. I myself would like to see a road extending from one end of the province to the other and joining with the coast of Hill and Harriman of the United States. That is, or was a contentious question at one time in some quarters. We cannot have too many railways, and above all things we cannot have too many competing railways in the province of Alberta. (Applause.) Now Mr. Speaker, let me come to the question of the amount of the guarantee, namely \$20,000 a mile. My friend the honorable member for Sturgeon referred to the guarantee which was given by the Ontario government to the C.N.R. of \$20,000 per mile from Toronto to Sudbury, and I was glad that he brought up the comparison between that country and this country to the north of us. I know the province of Ontario very well because I lived there a number of years, and I know the part of the country to which he refers, and I want to say to you here, that if ever there was a justification of the Alberta government for giving the guarantee we gave the Alberta and Great Waterways railway that justification was amply afforded when you compare it with the proposition of the Ontario government. We can put in the first 50 miles of this road more people than they could put along the line of railway from Toronto to Sudbury in 50 years' time, though it was a line of 258 miles. When you get back into the province of Ontario a distance of 25 miles, you find a country which is not fit for settlement; when you get back 25 miles into the province of Ontario, you are in the best part of the province of Alberta; when you get 50 miles further you are in just as good; when you get a hundred miles further you are in just as good; and when you get 350 miles north of this city you are in a country in the primeval forest, great many people better than you are in at the present time. So if you want to justify the province of Alberta in guaranteeing this railway, it is in the extent of \$20,000 a mile, I say let us have it built, and in two years' time the people living on the mountains of that great district will be the justification for the guarantee we have given.

R. B. Bennett—That should make it less.

Mr. Cross—He does, and I will prove it.

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part of some people in the legislature, one person at least is very anxious to have him speak. But I cannot say that I must again congratulate my friend the junior member for Calgary upon the acquisition which he has made to his party in this province.

Now, I propose to deal with this matter of specifications because the ex-minister of public works said to you, and said today on the floor of the House, that if the specifications which the government adopted were the same as the C. N. R. main line, he would have taken no objection to the arrangement made with the Alberta and Great Waterways railway, and I propose to show him, and to show the members of this legislature that the specifications of the Great Waterways railway are exactly the same as the C. N. R. branch lines, as built in this province, and exactly the same as the C. N. R. branch lines are built upon. In other words this government did not vary one iota in the matter of specifications in connection with any of these railways. The honorable member for Sturgeon referred to a letter which had been written to himself by MacKenzie and Mann in connection with their specifications, and I want you to follow closely with me the first words of that letter, the first words of that letter. Mr. Mann says—

"I enclose herewith copy of specifications of the Canadian Northern railway main line from Grand View to Edmonton, and from Prince Albert eastward 100 miles, and when the government began to deal with this matter of specifications we adopted the specifications which were in this letter, they are the exact specifications upon which the Canadian Northern was built from Grand View to Edmonton."

Mr. Boyle—What does Mann say in his letter?

Mr. Cross—He says: "I enclose herewith copy of specifications of the C. N. R. main line, etc."

Mr. Boyle—What else does Mann say about it?

Mr. Cross—I am coming to that.

Mr. Boyle—Does he say that the specifications were adopted by the government in connection with the Great Waterways railway, and in connection with the Grand Trunk Pacific and C. N. R. branch lines?

Mr. Cross—He does, and I will prove it.

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He did build the road on those specifications, and I will show you how it was done.

Mr. Boyle—It will be a good trick if you do.

Mr. Cross—Oh, not such a very difficult trick, and possibly I may convert my friend from Sturgeon, and possibly he may come back after he is convinced of this one essential, as it is the one thing on which the ex-minister of public works left this government. He, the ex-minister of public works, says he left the government because the specifications of the Great Waterways railway were not the same as the specifications for the C. N. R. from Grand View to Edmonton, but I am prepared to show him they are absolutely the same in every respect.

(Mr. Cushing returns to chamber.)

Mr. Cross—I am glad the ex-minister of public works has come back to listen to what I have to say, because I think I can almost convince him that he should still be a member of the government upon this matter upon which he left the cabinet. If I am right, he informed this House this very day that if the C. N. R. specifications were the specifications connected with this railway, he would not have been a member of the government.

Mr. Cushing—No, no.

Mr. Cross—He told me that the day he left office.

Mr. Bennett—You had no information that he had left until the other day. (Laughter.)

Satisfied With C. N. R. Specifications. Mr. Cross—I really had heard he had left. (Laughter.) The lieutenant governor of this province, however, had not given the premier authority to announce it to the House. But perhaps I am a little extravagant in my statements, yet I say this, that the ex-minister of public works did say that if the C. N. R. specifications of their main line were adopted for the Great Waterways railway, he would have been satisfied and would have had no reason to complain. Well, I propose to show you these specifications were adopted by the government in connection with the Great Waterways railway, and in connection with the Grand Trunk Pacific and C. N. R. branch lines. Mr. Mann says in his letter:—

Mr. Cross—He says: "I enclose herewith copy of specifications of the C. N. R. main line, etc."

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