

REPORT PRESENTED.

Mr. CARON laid before the House the report on the state of the Militia of the Dominion of Canada, for the year 1880.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PACIFIC COAST AND ASIA.

Mr. LANGEVIN moved that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions:—

1. That it would be of great advantage to Canada that telegraphic communication should be established between the Pacific Coast of the Dominion and Asia, and that certain facilities and advantages should be granted to any company willing and able to establish and maintain the same.

2. That with this view, it is expedient to provide that if Sandford Fleming, Esquire, who has submitted a plan for the formation of a company for the said purpose which has met with the approval of the Governor in Council, and such persons, not less than five in number, as may be associated with him in the undertaking, do before the 1st day of October next, apply for letters patent under the Act 40 Vict., chap. 48, incorporating them as a company for the purpose aforesaid, and show to the satisfaction of His Excellency in Council, that they have complied with the preliminary requirements of the said Act, and are able and ready to establish and maintain such telegraphic communication as aforesaid, letters patent may be issued incorporating them for such purpose, under the said Act and the Act 38 Vict., chap. 26, with the powers and privileges, and subject to the obligations provided by the said Acts, and with the exclusive privilege of landing a telegraphic cable or cables on the said Pacific Coast during twenty years; but subject also to the following conditions:—

(1) The telegraphic communication between the two continents shall be completed within five years from the date of the charter, and shall be thereafter regularly and efficiently maintained;

(2) The rates to be charged for messages shall be moderate and subject to approval by the Governor in Council;

(3) Any further conditions which may be inserted in the Act to be passed in this behalf or in the charter granted under it;

(4) Default on the part of the company to perform the said conditions shall subject them to the forfeiture of their charter.

He said: Mr. Sandford Fleming some time last year communicated with the Government on the importance of having telegraphic communication open from Canada to Asia. The Government, on the report of the hon. Minister of Railways, considered the matter, and thought it of such importance that they should grant, subject to the approval of Parliament, conditions or advantages to Mr. Fleming and the company to be formed by him, in order to secure that communication, and that it should be a Canadian one. The importance of securing telegraphic communication with Asia may be well appreciated now when we are expending large sums of money to build a railway across the continent and complete our railway communication from ocean to ocean. We are not going to the Pacific Ocean for British Columbia alone, but in order to compete there for the trade of the world, for the trade especially of those countries with which we will, no doubt, be more intimately connected by trade—I mean China and Japan. Under those circumstances, it cannot be a matter of indifference whether we should have telegraphic communication between those countries and Canada or not. We must have felt more than once the difficulties of our position at different periods when, having to communicate between Canada and England, we had to do so across the United States territory. These lines might possibly not be open to us at certain periods. Communication between America and the continent of Asia should not be left entirely in the hands of our powerful neighbors and friends, the United States. It should be a pride for us, as a country, that in all matters of this kind, when we can afford it, Canada should have a share in these great works. Under these circumstances the Government passed the following Order in Council:—

17th June, 1880.

On a memorandum dated 20th May, 1880, from the hon. the Minister of Railways and Canals, representing that a proposition has been received from Mr. Sandford Fleming having in view the extension of the Pacific Railway Telegraph to Asia by sub-marine cable.

That the scheme, which has been treated at length by Mr. Fleming in his last report as Engineer-in-Chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway,

comprises the formation of a company and the grant of certain concessions on the part of the Canadian Government, namely:

1st. The exclusive privilege of landing a submarine cable on the Pacific coast of Canada.

2nd. The privilege of placing a wire for cable business on the posts of the Pacific Railway when erected, and that Mr. Fleming requests that these concessions may be made to himself individually, as an initiatory step.

That the report of the Chief Engineer of Government railways in operation, holds that great advantage would accrue to Canada through the carrying out of this scheme.

The Minister accordingly, upon such report and the advice therein contained, recommends that the concessions stated be granted to Mr. Fleming upon the following conditions:—

1st. That a substantial commencement of the work be made within three years, and that the cable be laid across the Pacific Ocean within five years from the date of the completion of the overland line.

2nd. That after the cable connection is made the sub-marine telegraph be satisfactorily maintained for purposes of traffic, and be operated efficiently.

3rd. That unless otherwise authorized by the Governor General in Council, the maximum rates of charges be not higher than those mentioned in Appendix No. 24 of the Canadian Pacific Railway Report of 1880 above referred to.

4th. That the Government reserve the right to take possession of the whole at any time after completion under payment of a sum equal to the capital expended, together with a reasonable percentage added.

5th. That the suggested terms of arrangement be subject to the approval of Parliament.

The Committee submit the above recommendation for Your Excellency's approval.

Mr. Fleming having had communication of this document, and feeling that the time had come for him to ascertain how far he could succeed in the undertaking, communicated with capitalists in England and in Canada. He has ascertained that a powerful company could be formed if Parliament would put the company in a position to receive a charter and have the privileges asked for. His intention is not to ask for any special powers, for the right to lay a telegraph line across the Atlantic Ocean or across the Dominion of Canada. He intends taking advantage of all the existing lines, or the projected telegraph lines, between the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean, and, therefore, using the posts of those lines for his wires, and when he reaches the shores of Alaska, through Canadian territory, he will have the choice of a number of cables. The company will not ask for any special privileges, but will use those cables. The company intend to start from Nanaimo, where there is already a telegraphic line, and go as far north or north-west as Quatsino, one of the extreme points of the Island of Vancouver. From Quatsino the cable will be laid in as direct a line as possible to Walvis Bay, in Japan. Between Quatsino and Walvis Bay the Aleutian Islands will be touched and the communication made useful to them. But that is not a necessity, and the cable may be laid without touching those Islands. From Walvis Bay the line will be extended across the Island of Yesso to Satsuporo. The Island of Yesso is, I understand, about as large as Newfoundland, and enjoys about the same climate. But the interior of the Island has not been explored, and therefore it is impossible, just now, to say whether the line should go across that Island, or follow the shores. At all events from that point, the line will reach Yokohama, and Yeddo will probably be put in immediate communication with all the important telegraph lines of Asia. I understand that Japan has no less than 8,000 miles of telegraphic lines; therefore it is important to be in communication with that country, especially when the communication between Shanghai and Hong Kong is complete, and that communication from that point with India, Calcutta and Singapore exists. Thence lines extend to Australia, as far as Melbourne. So by this cable across the Pacific Ocean, under the charter petitioned for, Canada would be in communication with the whole continent of Asia, and with Australia. Our telegraphic communication across our own continent being complete, and also our telegraphic connection with England, one can understand the importance, not only to Canada but to the Empire, of the communication now proposed. Fleming