

AFTER RECESS

The House again went into Committee of Supply.

On item 83, Baie Verte Canal \$1000,000,

Mr. MACDONNELL (Inverness) said that annually since 1872, an appropriation had appeared in the estimates for the construction of the Baie Verte Canal. The work was recommended by the Canal Commissioner appointed in 1870, and which reported in 1871. The report of that commission constituted the basis upon which the appropriation had yearly been made. The commission was appointed to consider the canal system of the Dominion and to inquire upon the different works. In proceeding to the discharge of their duty the commission very properly prepared a circular, in which they asked for information, copies of which circulars were sent to all the Boards of Trade in the Dominion and the Boards of the United States—to all the Canadian newspapers and the mercantile communities. The report of that commission was untrustworthy in two respects:—First, because it recommended the construction of the Baie Verte Canal on the assumption that it would cost only three and a quarter millions, while the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, recently laid before the House, placed the probable expenditure at eight millions; secondly, because it pretended to furnish information on the subject both *pro* and *con*. But it appeared that there was not a single letter from any individual who reported against the construction of the work. The report only contained the opinions of three gentlemen in Nova Scotia, namely, Hon. Mr. DICKEY, Mr. MACFARLANE and Mr. FAIRBANKS. This circumstance proved that the report of the commission was untrustworthy, and yet upon it the House, without any discussion, was called upon to vote a very large appropriation. He opposed the construction of the Baie Verte Canal on two grounds; first, he considered it was impracticable, and such was the opinion of celebrated engineers who had examined and reported upon it. Captain CRAWLEY, of the Royal Engineers, in 1825, examined and reported the work to be impracticable, as many others had done since. He opposed the work in the second place because, admitting that it was feasible to

secure open navigation between Baie Verte and the Bay of Fundy, the cost would be more than its usefulness would warrant. If the work, however, was to be constructed at all the sooner it was undertaken the better, for every year the estimated cost increased. In 1825 the estimate of Mr. TALBOT and another engineer, was £155,897, or \$700,000; while a few years afterwards when the Canal Commission proceeded to inquire into the project the estimated cost was placed at \$3,215,000. Afterwards a report was made by Mr. KEEFER, who placed the cost at \$5,000,000; and to-day the Chief Engineer of the Dominion said the work could not be carried out for less than \$8,350,000, although he stated that a canal one-half the size of that proposed could be constructed for \$7,700,000. The construction of the canal was recommended for various reasons by the commission. They said that it would open communication between old Canada and the Maritime Provinces by the Gulf of St. Lawrence. If, however, the canal was constructed vessels would only use it in going from the Gulf into the Bay of Fundy, and the canal would not be used in making any port east of Yarmouth. The Commission stated that the distance from the Gulf to St. John would be reduced 600 miles, but such was not the fact, the reduced distance not being more than about 400 miles. A further argument adduced by the commission was that the canal would remove obstacles to trade being carried on between Montreal and the Bay of Fundy. He did not, however, know of any trade that was carried on between these points, or that would ever be carried on between them; or that there was anything of importance to ship from the Bay of Fundy. Of course there was fish, and there were some grindstones; but surely the Dominion would not believe a canal costing eight millions of money, to ship a few grindstones, a little shad, and some pickled herrings, was a necessity. A further reason the commission gave was that the canal would afford an improved and shorter route between Lake Huron and Boston. But the people of the United States did not appear very anxious to promote or encourage trade relations with us; and even if they did, they derived an equal advantage from the trade with the people of Canada, so that if the canal was

Mr. McDonnell.