

## Mistake in Distance.

distance to be saved by the Short Cut. The Commissioners had represented the distance saved from Montreal to St. John as only 225 miles, whereas it is actually 500 miles, making an error in their calculations of 275 miles. Their opinion was, that the small distance to be saved would not warrant the expenditure. The prejudice produced in some quarters by the misrepresentation of distance (and hence the erroneous conclusions of the report) endures to this day. The following admissions were however made:

"The evidence taken, and the observations which the Commissioners have had the opportunity of making, have impressed them deeply with the vast resources of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and the large increase which may be reasonably 'looked for in their trade and commerce.'"

## Fortunate result for the Dominion.

It was, however, most fortunate for the Dominion that the verdict of this Commission, incorrect as it was, delayed for a while the public expectation. It gave time for a *new idea* to be developed which was happily destined to prevent the country from falling into a most irretrievable error of judgment and from an expenditure counted by millions of dollars,—a *better mode of communication between the two seas was possible.*

## A Ship Railway.

In 1875 the author of this paper submitted his opinion to the public through the Press that a SHIP RAILWAY would not only fulfil all the requirements, but in many respects would be preferable to a canal; that there was no engineering difficulty either in the construction or operation of such a line; and that vessels in full cargo could be transported over the Isthmus in perfect safety and at small expense. That the transport would take less time, and the maintenance, repairs and operating would be no greater than by canal. This bold suggestion arrested all further discussions of a canal, and for six years there was no further move made tending to solve the problem of the Isthmian Transit. The Dominion Government had entered upon a policy of fostering its own manufactures and relying upon its own productions for its prosperity. The result soon showed itself in a marked increase in the raising of coal and lumber, which was followed by a corresponding increase in the coasting trade and commercial marine of the Maritime Provinces.

## The National Policy.

## Proposal to Government.

At length, in 1881, the author carried out, at his own expense, a survey and location for a Ship Railway, and having found a good line, submitted a proposal to the Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Minister of Railways and Canals, offering to form a company to carry out the work, provided the Government would subsidize the work, for about one-third the cost of a canal.

## Annual Subsidy.

The proposed subsidy took the form of an annual contribution by the Government to the Company of \$150,000 per annum for twenty-five years, which, if capitalized at four per cent., would be equal to the sum of \$2,343,312.

## Great saving to the country.

The proposal, therefore, if adopted, would save to the country the cost of the Canal, to which it was pledged, as before stated, estimated at \$7,100,000, less the sum of \$2,343,312, the capitalized value of the subsidy, or a saving of no less than \$4,756,688.

## Report of Mr. Schrieber, C. E.

Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Minister of Railways and Canals, referred the whole question to the Chief Engineer of his Department, and Mr. Collingwood Schrieber reported as follows:

## Project practicable.

1. "That the project is quite practicable of execution."

## Ship Railway a good substitute for the Canal.

2. "That the Ship Railway as proposed would be a good substitute for the Canal originally contemplated."

## Great advantage in respect of cost.

3. "That the advantage in respect of cost as compared with that of a Canal would be greatly in favour of the Ship Railway, the cost of a half tide canal being calculated by the Government Engineers at from \$5,650,000 to \$8,217,849; whereas the subsidy asked for by