

traffic could be moved with the greatest possible speed and at the least possible cost. I quote from the historical sketch of the Intercolonial, 1832 to 1876, written by Sir Sandford Fleming, page 110:

No portion of railway work is more important than its bridges. When a line is carried out by private effort, a circumscribed capital may compel the adoption of cheap structures. In such cases it is not the character of the structure, or its economy, which commends itself; but it is the necessity of the case, which limits its cost.

A railway constructed to meet a national requirement, and situated like the Intercolonial, is controlled by no such limitation. It requires no argument to establish that in such circumstances all structures should be of the best form suggested by experience, and that the most durable material should be used. They are then permanently built, and require no subsequent renewal. The first expense is the one cost and in the end, the durable structure is by far the least costly.

This is the opinion of that eminent engineer who served Canada so faithfully and well for many years. When later on he was connected with the construction of the Canadian Pacific he was forced by circumstances to accept bridges of a less durable structure than those which he here recommends, but those have since had to be rebuilt. During the last twenty years the Grand Trunk Pacific has practically rebuilt its road, while the Transcontinental is there for years to come, with its small cost of maintenance per mile compared with that of other roads.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that the committee will bear with me in my expression of opinion with regard to these matters. Only by discussion and suggestion can we hope to arrive at a solution of our difficulties in connection with the railway situation. Of course, it would require a mind greater than mine, minds even greater than those of many others who have considered the matter, to find the right solution for the problem. But if in the few suggestions which I have made I have been of some assistance to the Minister of Railways, my remarks shall not have been in vain. I feel sure, Mr. Chairman, that hon. gentlemen opposite who have had the patience to listen to me know that what I say is right. It is hard to admit a false policy, but we all at times have had to admit error. Let my hon. friends, therefore, admit that they have been in the wrong, and go ahead and do something. Let us take such steps as will result in affording us the cheapest possible means of transportation consistent with rapidity and efficiency, so that our

people will be able to command a market for all that they produce.

Some attempt has been made, on the ground of lack of cheaper transport facilities, to export grain from Alberta through the Panama canal. One ship, I understand, was loaded last fall and proceeded via the west coast and through the Panama canal to Europe. It was estimated at that time that the farmers who were shipping via that route would save three cents a bushel on the cost of transportation. When the Board of Railway Commissioners last September were in a hurry to raise the freight rates forty per cent, they thought they would help the farmers in connection with the shipment of their grain to the seaports of Canada, but the effect was that the grain went through United States ports. But now the farmers are endeavouring to find a remedy for themselves by shipping through the Panama canal. The Panama canal has certain advantages; it may be of advantage to British Columbia in the export of her lumber, coal and other products, but it cannot possibly rival transportation over Canadian railways through Canadian ports. When the western farmers' grain reaches the Panama canal, it will have to meet competition from Buenos Ayres and Argentine ports. Wheat produced in the Argentine Republic can reach the Panama canal at very little cost, at a cost not to be compared with that of transporting wheat produced in Alberta to the Pacific coast. Therefore, the farmers of Alberta will not be able to compete with the farmers of Argentina. Moreover, shipment via the Panama canal will be a slow process so that the wheat could not reach the market at the desired time, and rapidity of transit is a great consideration in the shipment of wheat. Therefore, the only really possible route for the transportation of the products of the West is from Winnipeg to Quebec in summer and to St. John or Halifax in winter.

If I have not been able to interest the committee as I should have liked, I have taken part in this debate in the exercise of my duty as the representative of the people of my constituency, and in the hope that others will have the same courage and will offer suggestions. Had it not been for the invitation of the minister to any member, who so desired, to make suggestions in honesty of purpose I would not have taken that liberty. I thank you, Mr. Chairman and the committee for extending the privilege that you have given