

House of Commons Debates

THIRD SESSION, FOURTH PARLIAMENT.

Volume XI.

2nd Volume of the Session.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

WEDNESDAY, 2nd February, 1881.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

SALE OF RAILWAY PASSENGER TICKETS.

Mr. KIRKPATRICK, in introducing a Bill (No. 43) respecting the sale of railway passenger tickets, said: The object of the Bill was to prevent the unauthorized sale of railway passenger tickets. This practice, which is known as that of ticket scalping, has been developed within the last few years, and is assuming every year greater proportions. I am aware it is a matter requiring very careful consideration before this House should pass a law prohibiting the carrying on of every kind of business; but I shall be able to show the House that this business has a very injurious effect. Canadian railways, especially the trunk lines, have to compete with railways in the United States, and it is the practice across the lines to sell through railway tickets at a lower rate than the local tariff rate in Canada; the reason alleged for this action being, that if they do not do so, they would not obtain any of the through passenger traffic. Those tickets are brought into Canada and sold. In the contract entered into by the railway company with the passenger to carry him, say from Chicago to Boston and return at a certain rate, it is distinctly stated that one of the conditions is that the ticket is not transferable. As soon as the passengers arrive in Canada they find offices open in some of the large cities where it is announced that railway tickets are bought and sold. Tickets are sold to those unauthorized agents, and a fraud is thus perpetrated on the railway companies. Not only has the practice a tendency to allow the use of partly used tickets, but it is a direct incentive to railway employees to commit a breach of trust, either by allowing tickets to pass without being punched, or by obtaining passes which have been used and selling them over and over again at greatly reduced rates to those unauthorized agents. Not only that, but such offices are places where stolen goods are received. When railway passenger tickets have been stolen from the company's office they have in many cases been taken to those unauthorized agents. There is no way of tracing the tickets sold by such agents, and of ascertaining whether they have been stolen from the company's offices. It is proposed by the Bill to prevent the practice of ticket scalping by stating that persons selling tickets in the various cities must be authorized by the railway companies, and that unless they are so authorized they shall not sell the tickets to pass over the lines, and a contravention of this Act shall be a misdemeanor, and the offender shall be liable to fine or imprisonment or both. There was a proposal in the Bill by which a railway company could purchase tickets belonging to another company, so that the companies may be able to give through rates.

Bill read the first time.

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ST. JOHN HARBOR.

Mr. DOMVILLE enquired, Whether it is the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill, this Session of Parliament, to place the harbor of St. John, N.B., under a Commission?

Mr. POPE (Queen's) said that some correspondence had taken place on the subject; but hitherto, parties in St. John had not been able to agree among themselves. If they arrived at an agreement and submitted the matter to the Government, their proposal would be taken into consideration.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

Mr. BLAKE enquired, What is the present estimated cost of the first 100 miles of the Canadian Pacific Railway, west of Selkirk, now under construction, and to be taken over by the Syndicate?

Sir CHARLES TUPPER said the total estimated cost of the first 100 miles of the Canadian Pacific Railway, west of Selkirk, was \$1,350,000, equal to \$13,500 per mile; and he would lay on the Table a detailed statement showing how that estimate had been arrived at.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. PLUMB. Mr. Speaker, I wish to occupy the time of the House one moment, as a matter of favor, for a personal explanation. I was unexpectedly called to my feet yesterday to reply to the hon. member for North Norfolk. I had no idea of addressing the House at the time, and perhaps, under the excitement of the moment, I said more than I would have said under other circumstances. It has always been my desire—and I think the House will agree that I have shown that desire—to observe, so far as possible, the proprieties of this House, and not in any way to infringe, not only the Rules, but the courtesies of debate; and I think it is due to the House that I should say that, on this occasion, I did make use of an expression which, upon more mature reflection, I would not have used. I make this explanation without consultation, without suggestion, and certainly not because I was vaguely called to account for it by an hon. member who, I must say, did it in a very courteous manner last night; but I do it because I think every gentleman who occupies the time of this House owes it to himself, to the House, and to the country, if at any unguarded moment he descends below the point at which fair argument and fair debate should stop, that he should promptly endeavor to put himself right. No man in the House, perhaps, has had more occasion than I, from those who have been my opponents in the House and from the Opposition public press, to feel somewhat bitterly in respect to personal attacks which have been made upon me. But, Sir,

"I carry anger as the flint bears fire,
Which, much enforced, yields a hasty spark,
And straight is cool again."

and if I am bitter or severe, the feeling passes away with the occasion. I wish to say that I had no intention of making a personal attack when I unguardedly said that