

not been done. The argument is that the unimpeded use of the Mississippi River was of such vast and transcendent importance to us and our right of deposit at New Orleans was of such great value that the selling of Louisiana Territory to a strong power was a menace to us that we could not possibly pass by in silence.

It is one of the most vigorous and instructive letters I have read for a great while, for it lays down correctly the fundamental doctrine which all nations practice, when their paramount and permanent interests are concerned. It declares boldly for war, if war is necessary, to protect such interests.

The CHAIRMAN. And so dispose of them and get them out of the way?

Mr. WILSON. Exactly. An English writer of some celebrity, Mr. Edward Dicey, has recently published a paper, which was republished in Littell's Living Age last year, discussing the tendency of large and powerful nations to absorb smaller and weaker ones, and justifying such absorption when made under the pressure of their "paramount, permanent interests." Nations act upon this principle sometimes unconsciously. The menace to their interests is so great that every act they do is for the purpose of getting the difficulty out of the way.

As to the St. Lawrence River, I have no doubt that it is to-day much more important to us and to the people of the Northwest in the way of free trade and cheap transportation than the Mississippi River was in 1802. And I think it is questionable if it may not be of as great importance to us as the Mississippi is to-day. Because, after all, the St. Lawrence runs to the east, and the commerce of our country, especially that of the Northwest, goes to the east. It naturally seeks the Atlantic sea-board and European countries by the shortest and most direct line. There are some difficulties about its going the other way, and I have no doubt if we owned the St. Lawrence River to-day we should send more traffic down it than goes down the Mississippi.

From the foregoing, and much that might be added, it seems to me that Congress is fully justified in so amending the Interstate Commerce act as to cut off all Canadian railroads from competing for or participating in our local, interstate, or national freight traffic as completely as all foreign ships are and always have been prohibited from engaging in our coasting trade. There is no discernible difference between the kinds of commerce in question, except that one is borne on land and the other on water, and inasmuch as Congress regulates one by forbidding any foreigner to compete in it, it should be consistent, and in common fairness, as well as in the furtherance of our paramount permanent interests, regulate the other in the same manner.

It has been suggested that the interests of our producers and shippers should make us slow to adopt measures which may operate to cut off competition and advance rates. That is a suggestion which I do not think has any particular force in this case. I am satisfied that there are enough of our own railroads to make competition just as lively as the most exacting shipper could demand. I do not believe that the result of shutting off the Canada railroads would be to advance rates one particle between the east and the west. But it is self-evident that whatever business the Canada railroads now carry from the United States and redeliver to points in the United States would be divided between our own traffic lines.

In connection with this point I would suggest that if we want to lower the rates by competition the logical thing to do is to open our coasting trade from our northern river and lake points to foreign-built vessels. That would add competition, for it would open our trade to a kind of transportation that is cheaper than railroad transportation.

I am unable to perceive how the cutting off of the Canadian railroads could advance our rates. I do not believe it would, but I am sure it will tend to give us stability of rates, and that is just what we want, for the simple reason that the Canadian railroads are now outside of our borders and left free under the Interstate Commerce act to tax their local traffic to just what