

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce, with only three dissenting voices, has passed a resolution asking the Federal Government to provide, in the estimates, a sum sufficient to induce the establishment of steam communication between Canada and the British and foreign West Indies. It may be taken for granted that this rational demand will be yielded; indeed it was stated, by one of the speakers, that the government has already advertised for tenders for this purpose. The advantage which New York possesses over Halifax, in this trade, is shown by the fact that American steamers make the passage in six days, and Halifax schooners consume thirty days in making it. Successful competition, on these terms may well be impossible. With steam communication both cities will be placed on an equal footing. To oppose the change is to display the same spirit that tried to keep out machinery and to prevent every other improvement by which humanity has benefited.

O'Brien in his first lecture in Canada, delivered in Montreal, felt called upon to explain the enigma of his visit to Canada: why a governor-general should be attacked in his official position because he had had trouble with his Irish tenants. He tried to give logical coherency to this bull by saying that Lord Lansdowne had been selected, on account of his official position, by other Irish landlords, to make the experiment of eviction; if he were successful, the sky would fall, in consequence of other landlords following his example; but if he failed, home rule would come; anyhow, if O'Brien was listened to, Lord Lansdowne would be driven by popular feeling to throw up his position of governor-general. A more clumsily constructed fable it would be difficult to conceive. The invention about Lord Lansdowne being selected, and why, to evict tenants, is too preposterous for the most thorough-paced Nationalist to swallow, in his lucid moments.

DISALLOWANCE FINDS A DEFENDER.

A pamphlet under the title of "Disallowance" is a vigorous defence of the policy which goes under that name. Though anonymous it gives the impression that it may have been written mainly in the interest of the Canadian Pacific Railway. However this may be, it is well that both sides of the question should be heard; and it must be admitted that the author of the pamphlet makes out a pretty strong case. He asks whether, "after an expenditure of public funds, amounting to one hundred and fifty millions of dollars, in the purchase of the North-West Territory, in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the suppression of two rebellions, the surveyings and partial settlement of immense tracts of newly acquired and newly developed territory, the establishment over a vast but scantily-peopled area of our political and municipal institutions," we are "to abandon the country and the commerce we have created, and hope to create, and hand it over to the people of the United States."

Doubtless the time will come when we shall ask whether we ought to debar ourselves from the benefits of connection with the American railway system, in our North-West; but the time has not yet come for setting up a rivalry to the domestic system which, at so great sacrifices, we have created.

"Must we," the author further asks, "not only commit commercial suicide, but pave the way for the political ruin of our country by supplying the people of the Canadian North-West with the strongest temptations and inducements to abandon our commercial future," and to throw in their lot with the people of the United States?" Among the agitators who are making an issue of disallowance, the author evidently believes the charter-mongers to be the noisiest and most persistent. At the bottom of this agitation, he assures us, are the St. Paul and Manitoba and the Northern Pacific railways, which have cast long eyes on the commerce of Manitoba and the North-West. Joined to these foreign railways are the Manitoba and Northwestern railway company, and "parties whose names are mentioned in the railway charters, that are passing through the Manitoba legislature, and whose lines when constructed are expected to reach the United States boundary at such points as will make the charters most salable to the United States railway companies." Then follows an accusation which, if true, is the reverse of creditable to the parties concerned. It is that the United States railway companies "being in the market as buyers, the Manitoba and Northwestern being in the market as a seller, and the charter promoters of Winnipeg standing ready to knock down their ventures to the highest bidder, the motives of the select few who are laboring to prevent the trade of the North-West coming east to Canadian commercial centres, are plain and not to be misunderstood." It is bad enough that such discreditable traffic should take place, but worse still that it should be done in the name of patriotism. But there are people in this world who have the faculty of making a merit of their crimes. We do not say that the accusation is true, for we have no special knowledge on the subject; but there is undoubtedly ground for suspicion. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that the advocates of disallowance, in Manitoba, have the public ear, and that disallowance is unpopular among the hundred thousand people who inhabit that province. But the popularity of a measure involving the good faith of the Province and the Dominion is not sufficient to legitimize it: the moral obligation cannot be broken without dishonor.

The author of the pamphlet shows that the Canadian Pacific railway company might find means of protecting its interests, in case the threatened competition were allowed, by "disposing of its lines west of Winnipeg, with its great land grant and valuable telegraphic franchise, to some mammoth United States railway land and telegraphic corporation, that would gladly bid high for what would give them the absolute control of the Canadian North-West, with all that this implies." However much

this may look like bluff, it is a possibility which must be kept in view. That such a sale could be made there is no doubt; and if the Canadian Pacific were destroyed in its hopes as a commercial enterprise, it is impossible not to say that the sale might be made. What, then, would become of our national aspirations, in the North-West? The very instrumentality which, at an enormous expenditure, we have created would then be turned against us.

"Why," asks the author of the pamphlet, "should five millions of Canadians undertake, for the extension of trade and commerce and the consolidation and unity of this country, such burthens as no other young country ever assumed, if, at the very outset of a most promising career of development, she can be forced, by a very limited number of people, to reverse her national policy, abandon her dreams of internal trade, based largely on lavish public expenditure, and content herself by seeing her life-blood drained into foreign veins to increase the wealth and strength and energies of a country that refuses to trade with her except on terms which can only result in her complete absorption?" This is a pregnant question, and the allegation about the terms which the United States apparently wishes to force upon us is not destitute of probability. The Federal Government has dealt generously, munificently, with Manitoba and the North-West; and no sooner have we spent untold millions in making the country habitable by civilized man than, according to our author, a knot of charter-mongers who give themselves the airs of patriots, want to hand over the benefits of this expenditure to foreign railway companies—for a consideration. We must confess there is a good deal of truth in this. Manitoba, the writer shows, with its white population of one hundred thousand, one fifth less than that of the city of Toronto, and half as much as that of Montreal, has already more miles of railway relatively to her numbers, than any province in the Dominion. But that may not be a reason why she should desire to remain stationary, in this respect, and to forego the advantages of connection with the American system; but this desire cannot be a reason for sacrificing the general advantages which an enormous public expenditure had in view.

Experience tells us that it is quite possible for American railways to carry on a system of destructive competition, if they be allowed the opportunity, till they get the mastery; and then they would hope to recoup themselves, by monopoly rates. If Manitoba be suffering from excessive railway rates, as anti-disallowance advocates contend, it is a little singular, as the author points out, that no application for redress has been made to the railway committee of the Privy Council. The time will come when the best route, be it by Eastern Canada, Hudson's Bay or the United States, will find most patronage. But it is too soon to open the flood-gates of foreign competition on our national railway; it deserves to have a chance to establish itself in a strong commercial position; and then, when there is traffic enough for more roads, a choice of routes will be the natural solution of the carrying question of North Western Canada.