

I remember well the day in Canada, when old Sir Allan McNab, in answering a question regarding his political views, replied,—"My politics are railroads;" and from that day till this, the cry has ever been roads, more roads. Without roads a country is nothing, and never can be anything. See, for example, even in our little domestic comforts, what we lose at this present moment for want of the means of communication. I, for one, could live all the year round upon fresh codfish; and were I in Montreal, hundreds of miles from the sea, I could supply myself daily by going or sending to the market; while here, in the greatest fishing country in the world, such an article cannot be procured for love or money, unless it be imported from Nova Scotia! Again, I have during the winter received two letters from Tokai, Japan; the first dated November 24th, the last December 3rd, 1876. The former of these reached me here in St. John's on December 28th, the latter on January 13th—the average time of passage being about thirty-five days from the Antipodes, or a good deal less than the time of transit per royal mail on our *Great Northern route from this to Twillingate!*

In conclusion, I would beg to remark that in commencing a work of any kind, very much must depend upon the genius and experience of the constructor, whether the work is eventually to prove a success or the contrary; and road building is no exception to the general rule. A piece of bad engineering, in the first instance might be the means of doing material damage to the whole construction or to a country-side; as great as it might be to erect a splendid building upon a rotten foundation. As well to take a backwoodsman of Canada, who was an adept at building a log hut, to erect a building like the Houses of Parliament on the Thames or the Ottawa, as to place the charge of constructing roads in the hands of inexperienced men. Great highways are one thing; local tracks are quite another. A great thoroughfare through a new country must be made with a keen eye to the future, and engineered in such a way that when things become sufficiently ripe for further advancement, the railroad will supersede the old road without greatly changing its course, and the iron horse will replace the animal power.

With these convictions strong upon me, and keenly feeling conscious of utter disinterestedness, as I own neither an acre of land nor a mining share in the colony, I here once more express my belief that the elements of wealth and greatness abound in this island; but that without the construction of good lines of road through and through the country, by means of which capital and labor may be brought to bear, it will be futile to look for any real or permanent improvement. While thus advocating change—although I frankly admit my general opinions to be of the pronounced *conservative stamp*—I contend that *ultra conservatism*, or refusing to keep pace with the march of the age, is only less disastrous to the well-being of a people than reckless innovation, leading to anarchy and ruin.

His Excellency, our gallant Governor, has proclaimed his opinion that a new era is dawning upon Newfoundland, and his ministers have initiated