

MEMORANDUM.

The necessity of constructing a military road between Halifax and Quebec, so as to render Canada accessible to Her Majesty's forces at all seasons of the year, seems long to have engaged the attention of the British Government.

In 1838 and 1839, when Canada was invaded by organised parties of marauders from the neighbouring country, with the avowed intention of conquest, troops were transported by that route, in winter, when St. Lawrence was closed, with much difficulty, at an enormous expense, and with great suffering to the soldiery, and the impossibility of carrying military stores in sufficient quantities was then also fully proved.

Several explorations were consequently made by the military authorities, with a view to the construction of military road as part of the system of defence of the British North American Colonies. It was then suggested that a railway, besides being of more utility for this purpose than an ordinary road, would be of great commercial benefit to those Provinces; and at the same time confer the political advantage of connecting them more intimately with the mother country and with each other.

As this scheme would cost much more than the road originally intended, and as the Colonies would be so much more benefited thereby, it was thought right that they should contribute to the expense of construction.

A survey was accordingly made in the year 1848, by Major Robinson and other officers selected by the Imperial Government, but at the expense of the Colonies.

Several lines were explored by Major Robinson, but he reported the Eastern or coast line as preferable, although the longest and most costly, for several reasons (principally of a military character) given by him.

This route was considered by the Colonies, and especially by New Brunswick, as being comparatively of little value, except in a military point of view. It was long and circuitous; it passed through a country but little settled; and could not be expected to make any pecuniary return on the cost of construction for years.

The interest therefore of any moneys borrowed by the Provinces to build the railway, would fall entirely on their general revenues, a burden which they were little able to bear. These considerations being strongly pressed on Earl Grey, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, he acknowledged their justice, and in a despatch, dated 14th March, 1851, agreed that the British Government would guarantee the payment of the interest on moneys borrowed by the Provinces for the purpose of making the road, on the condition that it should pass exclusively through British territory; but he stated that it need not of necessity be built on Major Robinson's line. Any deviation from that line was, however, to be subject to the approval of Her Majesty's Government.

Missapprehension arose between Lord Grey and Mr. Howe, of Nova Scotia, then conducting the negotiation, as to whether, in case Major Robinson's line were adopted, the Imperial guarantee would not also be extended to a lateral railway running from the main line through New Brunswick westward to the frontier of the United States.

This side line, if constructed, would have much improved the commercial character of Major Robinson's line, as it would have formed a valuable feeder, and connected it with the general railway system of the United States. Acting, therefore, under the belief that the guarantee was to be so extended, the three Provinces of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia made an agreement to construct the railway from Halifax to Quebec in equal proportions, and proceeded to legislate upon it with a view to the immediate execution of the work.

On its being ascertained that it had not been intended by the British Government to grant the guarantee to the local line above referred to, all the objections to Major Robinson's route revived, and the arrangements between the Provinces fell to the ground.

Anxiously desiring the construction of the railway, the Provinces, although much disappointed at the frustration of their expectations, entered into a new arrangement.

They agreed, if the railway was built along the valley of the river St. John, Nova Scotia would advance three-twelfths, Canada four-twelfths, and New Brunswick five-twelfths of the cost of construction.

This line promised great commercial advantages, and a fair pecuniary return, and at the same time satisfied the condition imposed by the Imperial Government, that it should pass exclusively through British territory. The agreement thus altered was submitted to the Imperial Government for approval; but Sir John Pakington, then Colonial Secretary, in a despatch, dated 20th May, 1852, intimated his disapproval of the proposed deviation from the Eastern Line and that he therefore did not feel warranted in recommending the guarantee to Parliament. He, however, at the same time stated, that the Imperial Government was by no means insensible to the great national objects involved in the construction of the line, and that the most favourable attention would be given to any modification of the proposals then before him. The negotiations thus fell a second time to the ground, the Provinces are without their Inter-Colonial railway, and England has yet no military road to Canada.

The three Provinces have been driven, from the failure of these negotiations, to undertake, within their several territories, without concert, and on their own unaided credit and responsibility, the construction of railways, no doubt of local advantage, but not of general or national importance. It was not thought in Canada a fitting time to press this subject again on the British Government, when all its energies were directed to the vigorous prosecution of the Russian war, a struggle in which Canada fully sympathised, and was ready to make its own. But now that peace has been restored, it would seem that no time should be lost in undertaking this great work. Circumstances have arisen during the progress of the war, the enlistment and Nicaraguan questions with the United States for instance, will show that the necessity for such a road has not decreased. Whether as a means of pouring into Canada a sufficient force, or of withdrawing it therefrom, without delay, and at all seasons, in case of sudden exigency, it is equally called for.

The only bar to its construction up to 1852 was the difference of opinion as to route, and that difference it is believed, is not irreconcilable.

It is understood in Canada that the route by the valley of the St. John is not now considered by military men competent to judge, objectionable as a military road, nay, that there are strong reasons for its selection as such. At all events, no difficulty is apprehended in finding a line combining the requisites for a military and a commercial road.

While Imperial interest require as imperatively as ever the completion of this project, the position of Canada with respect to it has materially altered.

In 1852, there were no railways in operation in Canada (with two unimportant exceptions), and she had no winter route to the Atlantic; but since that time ten lines, extending over about 1600 miles, have been constructed, at an aggregate cost of about nineteen millions sterling, by private companies, chartered and aided by money grants from the Provincial Government to the extent of nearly five millions and a half. This sum has been raised partly by the bonds of Canada, on the immediate credit of her consolidated revenue, bearing six per cent. interest, and partly by her bonds, issued on the credit of a general municipal fund, established in the Province by legislative authority. Preparations are now also in progress for the construction of an interior line communication, far removed from the American frontier, by a combined system of railway and canal between the river, Ottawa and Lake Huron.

Canada has, therefore, already assumed the full measure of pecuniary obligation which her resources render prudent; but as access to the Ocean, and communication with England, can only be had in winter through the United States, it is manifest that, in so far as Imperial interests are concerned the railway facilities are in a great measure incomplete.

Canada is fully alive to the importance of providing for the maintenance of her connection with England, and she has sought opportunity, and availed herself of every occasion, practically to cement that relation.

For the purpose of establishing a direct postal communication with England, which should not only put a stop to a large contribution to the revenue of the United States,

but also attract to the Colony a share of that trade and that emigration which was being diverted to that country, she has established, by the payment of an annual subsidy of £50,000, a direct weekly line of Ocean steamers between the Colony and England. In this enterprise she is not only unaided by England, but has to combat a line plying to the ports of the United States, supported by a subsidy from the Imperial Government exceeding £180,000 per annum.

The Province has also enrolled, drilled, and armed, at her own expense, a large and available volunteer force, consisting already of sixteen troops of cavalry, seven field batteries of artillery, five companies of foot artillery, and fifty companies of riflemen; all provided with the most modern and effective arms. This force is maintained at a heavy cost to the Colonial Treasury, and being well disciplined, would be of essential and immediate service, should occasion arise for their active employment.

In addition to this, Canada has been divided into military districts, and the whole sedentary militia, consisting of every man capable of bearing arms, has been organized.

In so far as the commercial wants of the Province are concerned, they are amply supplied by the existing railway communications to the American seaports, New York and Boston, and by the Railway from Montreal to Portland, over which a Canadian company has complete control; but this entire dependence on, and exclusive relations with a foreign country, cannot but exercise an important and unwholesome influence on the status of Canada as a portion of the empire, and tend to establish elsewhere that identity of interest which ought to exist between the mother country and the colony.

We are sensible that we need not dwell on the grave and, possibly, disastrous consequences which, if a rupture should unhappily arise with the United States, may result from the want of communication in winter between England and the interior of the Province; but it is evident that the safety of the Colony can only be secured either by keeping, from the moment of the first apprehension of danger, a military power within it of such magnitude as would repel any invading force, during the five months when reinforcement or supplies could not be obtained by sea; or the means must be created of throwing in that force, and transporting them to those points which are assailable.

We would further mention some facts which shew that while the means of resisting invasion are in no way increased, the facilities for accomplishment are daily becoming greater. There are now no less than seven American railways terminating directly at the Canadian boundary, and a far greater number touching the water of the River St. Lawrence and the Lakes Ontario and Erie, which divide Canada from the United States. All these roads may be said to form together a continuous line, running parallel with, or in easy proximity to, the provincial boundary, and by their means, America would be enabled to concentrate, with the utmost expedition and ease, all her forces upon any quarter, and to choose her own point of attack.

It may be urged that war with America is impossible, or at least an event so unlikely and remote as to justify no expenditure in anticipation of it. Admitting that the character and moderation of the Federal Government afford assurances of continued amity, it is not to be forgotten that there are other elements, not subordinate, whose influence may at any time become too powerful for control. The best safeguard against aggression is the power of repelling it. The knowledge of our weakness and exposure to attack may do much to precipitate now which, were our strength understood, would never be undertaken. It is now well known that, being cut off from England, the Province cannot make her resources and strength available should the necessity for their exercise unhappily come to pass, and when the occasion does arise, it will be too late to provide the means. The road cannot be constructed with a due regard to reasonable economy for several years, and experience shews how impossible to foresee what events within that period may interrupt the relations with a country, the peculiar constitution of which vests so much power in a class whose sarily lead to a rupture. While

therefore the commercial or material advantages to Canada which would follow the construction of the road are comparatively unimportant, she feels it her duty to urge the high national considerations which demand that the work should be undertaken.

There can be little fear of any causes of difference between the Colonies and the United States. The danger hitherto has sprung from subjects wherein, as a Colony, Canada had no interest; but which (such as the Central American, the Oregon and enlistment questions,) were purely of Imperial concern, so that, should hostilities arise, Canada would (as she was during the last war) be made the battle ground in a quarrel which she did not cause, and in which she had no special concern. The Colony has received the solemn assurance of the Imperial Government, a promise on which she implicitly relies, that while she is expected to assume her share of the burden of any force which her own internal wants may require in time of peace, yet that the whole power of the Empire will be put forth for her protection and security against foreign aggression. Canada has acted on this assurance, and performed her part of the obligation; but we would respectfully urge that, without means of communication with Great Britain, the Imperial Government is powerless to perform its share; and that the very first step towards the fulfilment of the promise is to provide proper access to the country.

But, apologizing for presenting at perhaps too great length arguments whose weight may be fully admitted, we proceed to suggest a mode by which we propose that the work should be constructed.

The question of route is one, in so far as Canada is concerned, might be left to the Imperial Government and the lower Provinces, but the distance of that which would probably be chosen may be assumed at 600 miles. By Major Robinson's report, the cost of the longest or coast route of 635 miles is £7,000 sterling per mile, to which ten per cent. is added for contingencies, making the cost in round numbers £5,000,000.

Now Canada has already built, or has in progress, 110, and Nova Scotia 60 miles, available for any route selected for the Inter-Colonial Road, leaving 420 to be constructed. Allowing one million sterling to be added to Major Robinson's estimate for the rise in the cost of labor and materials, since 1848, the balance to be provided for is £5,000,000. This would include the cost of the whole section apporportioned to and now in process of construction by Nova Scotia, but does not include the cost of the 110 miles in Canada, on which a million, raised from other sources, will be expected.

We have reason to think that if the facilities we are about to mention be extended to Nova Scotia, that province would complete the additional sixty miles to her own frontier, and allow the whole to form a part of the national line. Assuming that New Brunswick would perform a nearly equal share (and her Legislature has already assumed a larger burden), there would remain for completion about two hundred and fifty miles, at an estimated cost—making allowance for the engineering difficulties—of between £2,500,000 and £3,000,000.

We propose that this sum shall be raised as follows:—

In the year 1841 Canada obtained from the Imperial Government a loan of a million and a half for the construction of her public works. This matures at a distant period; but, meanwhile, a sinking fund has been formed for its redemption. We suggest that the amount of this loan, including sinking fund, be granted in aid of the proposed railway; and that Canada shall be relieved from its repayment in consideration of her expending the whole amount in the construction of the line from Rivière du Loup, in Canada, towards Halifax.

Canada and New Brunswick have already appropriated all their ungranted public lands, for ten miles on each side of the line, in aid of the undertaking. It is assumed that these lands amount to about four millions of acres, and it is proposed that on the security of these, and the road generally, any balance requisite to complete the work should be raised as a first charge.

The system of land grants to aid the construction of railways has been followed with the most entire success in the United States of America, where lands from being almost worthless and unsaleable, have risen in va-