

was the *Baie Verte Canal*, and a survey and estimate of the cost was carried out at the instance and expense of the Dominion Government.

The Royal Commissioners, in their report, said :—

"The evidence submitted points out with remarkable force and unanimity the necessity of opening a highway for commerce between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the head waters of the Bay of Fundy, through the Isthmus of Chignecto dividing them,"

and so impressed were they with the truth of this that they submitted a special report, prepared by the Secretary of the Commission and endorsed by one of their own body, both of whom were civil engineers.

There was doubt as to the cost of the undertaking, but in reference to this the Commissioners said :—

"If the plan that is cheapest of accomplishment cannot be carried out because nature has not given the necessary facilities, the interest of commerce in this project is too great to be balked by an expenditure we did not at first anticipate. It demands the speedy opening of the channel, and will justify its construction almost at any cost."

Many other quotations could be given to show the great national value placed on this work, and the importance attached to it by leading public men.

A report, with specifications and estimates, was thereafter prepared for the Government by Messrs. Keefer and Gzowski, eminent Canadian engineers, and they placed the approximate cost at \$5,317,000.

The Government then intended to carry out the work, and Lord Dufferin, in his speech at the opening of the Session of 1873, at the time the above report was issued, used the following language :—

"I am glad to inform you that plans and specifications for the enlargement of the Welland, and the construction of the *Baie Verte Canal* have been completed, and that the works can now be put under contract. The surveys for the St. Lawrence Canals will, I am assured, be finished in time to commence the works at the beginning of next year. This will ensure the completion of all these great works at the same period."

The Government and Parliament of Canada were so impressed with the commercial advantages which would result from the Canal that Parliament in the three following years voted money to commence its construction. In 1872 and 1873 the Conservative Government included this in the estimates for the construction of Canals, and in 1874 the Liberal Government, which had then come into office, continued the policy and also voted money to commence construction. Both Liberal and Conservative Governments were therefore pledged to carry out this enterprise and have placed the facts on parliamentary record.

However, before expending any part of this money, the estimate was referred for revision to Mr. John Page, Chief Engineer of Public Works, and after a careful and exhaustive examination he reported that, in his opinion, Messrs. Keefer and Gzowski had under-estimated the cost, which he found would probably amount to \$7,100,000. As this was considerably in excess of the estimates