

BRITISH
NORTH AMERICA.

by side with a danger still greater. It would run for several hundred miles close upon the highway not only of the United States but of all nations.

Assume that the United Kingdom were destitute of a railway, and that it was proposed to construct one for the security of military communication and commercial traffic, would it be recommended that it should follow the immediate coasts of the islands, or that it should, as much as possible, run centrally through from north to south with branches to either coast?

The case proposed in New Brunswick is not essentially different, except that the inland frontier will be less exposed to clandestine attack than the sea-coast. No formidable design could originate and ripen for an inland attack without some warning; not so on the sea-coast. It has been affirmed by high authority, that even in England there would be no difficulty in the present state of steam navigation, in landing without any available notice a well appointed army on the south coast, which could march unopposed to London in two days. How insignificant then would be the ordinary means of opposition on the eastern coast of New Brunswick, not even the slight obstacle of a landing could oppose the clandestine attack and interruption of the proposed line of railway. It would pass (according to the Report) immediately across the heads of navigable rivers or bays, of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and for a long distance close along shore. Facility of approach by these means is mentioned in the Report as a superior advantage in the construction. This two-edged advantage also extends along the whole shore of the river St. Lawrence.

Report, p. 13.

It will scarcely be denied that it is important to reduce this source of danger to the shortest possible extent of the line. Nearly 100 miles of the most objectionable part of the shore of the St. Lawrence, and the whole of the gulf shore, are avoided by the central route through New Brunswick. If also it be the shortest and most expeditious, these would be most important offsets against an assumed increase of expense. It is not certain without survey that this construction of this part of the line would exceed the average cost. If not, then nearly a tenth of the whole expense would be saved. It would cost nothing along the line for defensive works, that would not be equally necessary if the railway did not exist. On the other hand, no limit could be assigned to the expense of efficiently guarding the sea-coast.

The central line would also be a common bond of union on a principle of equity to all local interests in New Brunswick; its branches would bind those interests as one. A one-sided line, with the influence of Government in its favour, would tend to the obvious antagonism of private enterprise.

The Report enters upon the question of the probable revenue from freight transmitted between Quebec and Halifax.

There can be but faint prospect of heavy freight finding its way along the whole line for shipment at Halifax for Europe, or the reverse, during the season of navigation, except where expedition is of more importance than cost, or in case of sudden emergency like that which occurred in 1846-7. During the winter season heavy articles required either way will naturally take the shortest line of railway, which may connect the open navigation of the sea with the nearest harbour of the St. Lawrence. The shortest line of railway of this description that can be constructed within British territory, or perhaps elsewhere, is that now in progress from the port of St. Andrew's. Another line, of not many miles greater extent, may terminate at St. John's; either of these will be 240 to 260 miles shorter than the circuitous line to Halifax, and both will be as promptly accessible as that port from Bermuda and the West Indies, and are only a few hours more remote from Europe. The central line would convert these branches into most important auxiliaries. The circuitous one would turn them into rivals.

The qualities of the trunk line, therefore, most calculated to insure revenue, are those of directness and expedition between the extreme points of communication, and as a commanding medium of distribution and absorption of traffic by branches to the chief maritime outlets. The most important of the latter must evidently be in the Bay of Fundy, because they are accessible all the year. To divert the trunk line as far as possible from these would be to exclude it from a fair prospect of revenue.

To render this more evident, an estimate of the comparative cost of transportation between the respective Atlantic ports of Halifax, St. John's, and St. Andrew's, and a common terminus either at Point Levi, or at River du Loup, is as follows:—

FREIGHT by RAILWAY, estimated at 1½d. sterling per ton per mile.

| Delivered at | From Point Levi. | | | | From River du Loup. | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--|--|
| | Distance in Miles. | Amount. | | Distance in Miles. | Amount. | | | |
| | | Per Ton. | Per Barrel. | | Per Ton. | Per Barrel. | | |
| Halifax . . . | 635 | £. s. d. | s. d. | 525 | £. s. d. | s. d. | | |
| St. John . . . | 390 | 3 19 4 | 8 0 | 280 | 3 5 7 | 6 6 | | |
| St. Andrews . | 375 | 2 8 9 | 5 0 | 265 | 1 15 0 | 3 6 | | |
| | | 2 6 10 | 4 8 | | 1 13 1 | 3 4 | | |

This estimate is predicated on the lowest rate of freight at present charged on the western railroad in Massachusetts. This is a line competing with the navigation of the Hudson, and affords a fair guide in the case under consideration.

Report, p. 26.

The report in question, however, estimates the whole cost of transportation from Quebec to Halifax at 11s. only per ton, or about one-seventh of a remunerative freight, a mistake arising apparently from the supposition that the cost of motive power is the whole cost, whereas it is only a small fractional part. The oversight is the more inconvenient, as it destroys the speculations founded upon it. There is no hope that a line terminating at Halifax can systematically