

185088

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE 20th APRIL, 1880, BY

HON. WM. MACDOUGALL,  
ON MR. BLAKE'S RESOLUTION.

Mr. MACDOUGALL: I rise with some reluctance, and—I may as well confess it—with some trepidation, to offer a few observations upon the Resolution or question before the House. We have been debating the Pacific Railway, and its relations with British Columbia, for three days and for three nights, and the question is still before us. My impression is that the speeches we have had from the other side of the House, and the arguments employed to induce this House not to go into Committee, but to adopt a Resolution not to proceed with the Railway in British Columbia, would carry us—if we listened to them, if they had weight with us—a great deal further. For my part, if I viewed this question as the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake) views it. if I believed the country to be in a condition of hopeless poverty, as he declares it to be; if I believed its financial resources were as limited, as unproductive as he represents them to be; if I thought our hopes of the future would not justify further expenditure on Capital Account, for any purpose whatever in the North-West, because the competition of the United States for the emigrant populations of the Old World will prevent us from selling, or settling, our waste lands in that part of the Dominion, instead of asking this House to declare that the further prosecution of the work of building the Pacific Railway should be postponed, I would take the ground that it ought to be abandoned. I should say, at least, that we ought not to proceed further than the Red River, and allow the settlement of the country beyond that point to provide for itself. The hon. member for West Durham, and some of his colleagues, on that side of the House, have presented to us certain alleged facts—I prefer to call them statements—and they have reasoned at great length upon them; but, admitting the premises, his conclusion, as I have said, is a very lame and impotent one. I will ask the indulgence of the House, while I go back to an earlier chapter in the history of this question, than that which the hon. gentleman de-

tailed to us. I do so for the purpose of showing that there are reasons why members of this House ought not to concur in the doctrine set up, in some quarters, as to the obligations of Canada towards British Columbia, respecting the Pacific Railway. I deny that there is any evidence to support the statement that we are under a Treaty obligation with British Columbia to expend millions and millions of money, whether we can afford it or not, to build this Railway. In the first place it may be well to glance at the history of British Columbia, prior to 1867. In 1858, gold discoveries were made in that country. Prior to 1866, there were two Governments in existence, one for the Island of Vancouver, and another for the main land; but they were not popular or representative Governments. The population was very small, mostly miners and traders. It was composed of Americans as well as Canadians, and foreigners from various countries, who had gone into that country in search of gold to better their fortunes. In 1866, a single Government was established. It was that of a Crown colony, and was directly under the control of the Colonial Secretary; but when Canada and the Maritime Provinces had agreed to form a Confederation, and while the Act of Union was under discussion, a number of persons in British Columbia desired to bring about the Union of that Colony with the old Provinces of Canada. An agitation took place, public meetings were held, speeches were made, and Resolutions passed, declaring that such a Union was expedient in the highest degree. Canada had not then sought to induce British Columbia in favour of the Union, though it was no doubt a part of the great scheme of 1864, for uniting all the Provinces of British America under one Government. It was then contemplated that British Columbia would, at some time, become a part of the Confederacy, and provision was made that Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia might come into the Union upon such terms as might be agreed upon between Canada and them, subject to the approval of the Imperial Government. But up to 1868, British Columbia was a