

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

TUESDAY, 21st December, 1880.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

THE CHRISTMAS ADJOURNMENT

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. After the conversation that took place last night about the adjournment, I have spoken to my colleagues, and, with a good deal of gentle pressure on both sides, I have resolved to alter the resolution of which I have given notice for to-morrow; and in order that hon. members may know exactly how long the Christmas holidays may be, I had better move it now, with the consent of the House. I move:

"That when the House adjourns on Thursday next, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, the 4th January, at three o'clock."

Mr. BLAKE. I only hope that the hon. gentlemen, to whom the hon. Minister has alluded as having exerted so much gentle pressure, will exert a stronger pressure with as successful results in a large matter.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I think that my hon. friend is a little out. I made, on Monday, a proposition to him.

Sir RICHARD J. CARTWRIGHT. Proposition; I think that the House is entitled to hear the proposition.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I have resisted, on greater occasions, pressure to get information about conversations before the results are attained.

Mr. FLYNN. While the time of adjournment is enough for the Ontario and Quebec members, it is not sufficient for the members of Nova Scotia and the Maritime Provinces.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE BILLS.

Mr. DREW moved a resolution admitting petitions for Private Bills up to the 1st February.

The motion, amended as to the date to read to the 15th January, agreed to.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

The House went again into Committee of the Whole, to consider certain proposed Resolutions, granting the sum of Twenty-five millions of dollars, and appropriating Twenty-five millions of acres of land, according to the terms of the contract relating to the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Mr. McLENNAN. What I desire to say on the subject of the resolution, I shall endeavor to put in as few words as may be consistent with the importance of the subject, and the magnitude of the interests that are involved. I think the House will agree with me that it is impossible for us to over-estimate the importance of this subject. It is one that concerns an extent of country, of which we can only form a very vague conception, and the probable future in their material and social interests of a multitude that no man can number. The importance of the subject is established by the fact that, for several years, it has been before this and the preceding Parliaments in various forms for settlement. It comes before us, to-day, a stage forward, by the right hon. leader of the Government and his colleagues presenting it to us in a form so fair for solution, that it becomes our duty to give it our best consideration. I think, Sir, it becomes our duty to deal with it with all the wisdom, the common sense, and the highest patriotism we can apply. The contract that is before the Committee is not a contract for building a house or a sewer, or even a short line of railway, every factor and condition in relation to which

Mr. BOWELL.

we can fully comprehend and provide for in the terms of the written contract, which we can fully estimate and fully guard against. On the first reading of this contract we notice the absence of such ordinary guarantees and conditions, but upon reading it again we discover that the subject is one to which such ordinary guarantees and conditions will not apply, that its features are upon such a scale that these guarantees can only be supplied by the higher guarantees of a firm, mutual interest, and dependence of the contracting parties. Without such conditions it is quite evident that no progress could be made on either side. Bearing in mind these considerations, I shall not trouble myself to consider the questions of lines, barleycorns, and inches of gradient and curve, nor of fractions or cents in rates of toll. Nor shall I, on the other hand, undertake to formulate fanciful estimates of the value of the land which forms a consideration to the builders of this road. The value of that land has been stated at various figures up to, I believe, four dollars an acre, and a very formidable amount of money has been stated as the sum that the construction of the railway was to cost. My idea is that, in dealing with this subject, we must deal with the lands in the North-West in the way in which they have been dealt with under corresponding circumstances in the United States. I find there that by common consent the general purpose for which land grants are made is to facilitate settlement and advance the general prosperity, rather than to make the lands a source of revenue. With this understanding, I believe that, to this day, the public lands of the United States are held and sold to settlers at \$1.25 an acre. But if we undertake to establish fanciful estimates of the value of land, I do not know why we should not say \$40, as well as \$4. It is impossible for us to say what the land is worth. Land is not like the food in our larder, or the raiment upon our back, or the creation of our handiwork, that perish with use. We might as well undertake to put a price upon the light of the sun, upon the rain that falls from the clouds; we might as well undertake to set a price upon the liberty which is our birthright, upon the privilege of using our energies, and our faculties, as freemen. The value of the land is in its use by the husbandman, and its development and occupation by a free, industrious and well governed and contented people. Again, the question arises in connection with this contract, as to the advantages of the other party to it, and the possibility of their acquiring great wealth. I think this Committee will agree with me that no men of substance or character could be found to undertake such a contract without, in the first place, freedom of action, freedom from those ordinary conditions and restrictions to which I have referred, and with the further prospect of a very great reward. In coming to the discussion of this question, we must not be dismayed by the flowers of rhetoric to which this contract has been subjected in its introduction to this House. We are familiar with such terms, terms that have lost their force here, at all events, such terms as madness, insanity, incapacity, national ruin, suicide. These adjectives have lost their force to us, they are too familiar. They have been applied for the last two years to a subject which, I think, is a fair demonstration of what I say. There is not one of those adjectives that has not been repeated over and over again in application to the National Policy, from the Opposition side. Well, I am glad to see in the Minister of Finance the smiling condition of a man with a full purse. The anathema in connection with the National Policy was, beyond any other, in the interest of the farmer; but I can safely appeal to every representative of this House as to the condition of the farming community at the present moment. I believe that every hon. gentleman in this House who comes from the country will tell us that if the farmer—one of whose great privileges as a Briton is the privilege of grumbling—is asked at the present moment about his condition, he will generally say that he has nothing to complain