

Chignecto Marine Transport Railway Company, Limited.

PRE-PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY OF THE SCHEME.

In order to present a connected statement a brief notice of this is necessary.

For many years before the original Incorporating Act of the Railway was passed in 1882 successive Canadian Governments had considered it was necessary to make a Ship Canal across the Isthmus of Chignecto, between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Bay of Fundy, in order to avoid the long journey by sea, around Nova Scotia, for vessels trading between ports on the St. Lawrence and ports in the Bay of Fundy and the United States. This idea, however, did not take any practical shape until November, 1870, when a Royal Commission was appointed,

"To institute and make a thorough enquiry as to the best means of affording such access to the seaboard as may best be calculated to attract a large and yearly increasing share of the trade of the North Western portion of North America through Canadian waters, as well as a thorough and comprehensive improvement of the Canal System of our said Dominion, on such a scale and of such a character as would best tend to afford ample facilities for the expansion and due development of its growing trade and commerce: and in such enquiry to consider the whole subject in all its bearings, as well in a commercial as in an engineering point of view, with the object of obtaining such reliable information thereupon as may furnish the necessary data on which to base a plan for the improvement of the Canal System of our said Dominion of a comprehensive character, and such as will enable Canada to compete successfully for the transit trade of the great Western Country; and especially to enquire into the public works and improvements hereinafter enumerated, that is to say, &c."

The Chairman of the Commission was Sir Hugh Allan. The other Commissioners were Mr. G. S. Gzowski, Mr. W. D. Calvin, Mr. P. Garneau, Mr. Alexander Jardine and Mr. J. L. Shannon. These gentlemen were selected as Commissioners on account of their complete knowledge of the mercantile conditions and requirements of Canada; their thorough acquaintance with shipping and of their exceptional experience as engineers. Mr. Samuel Keefer, the well-known Civil Engineer, was appointed Secretary.

A list of twelve canals was included in the reference to the Commission, and the Commissioners adopted a categorical method of enquiry. They divided the canals to be reported upon into classes, and amongst the works *of the first class* to be proceeded with,

"As soon as the means could be granted for this purpose,"