

The "All-Red" Imperial Fast Steamship Scheme



URING the course of a notable speech in the House of Commons on March 20, the Hon. Clifford Sifton said:

"I am taking up, I think, the time of the House longer than I ought, but I am going to ask the House to listen to me while I say a few words upon a subject which has been somewhat discussed in the press and which is known, whether rightly or wrongly, as the 'All-Red Route.' I may say at the outset that I have not the slightest intention of offering to the House an exhaustive discussion of the subject, because that would involve going into details and figures which would be wearisome and would not add anything in the long run to an intelligent appreciation of the subject. If the government should bring this matter before the House, they will furnish all the figures and details and the hon. members will then have an opportunity of studying them better than they would if I were to give them at present."

"When the conference, which took place last spring between the various colonies of the empire met in Great Britain, they passed a resolution which no doubt the honorable members are quite familiar with, but which, for the purpose of forming a basis for discussion, I shall take the liberty of reading. The resolution passed then was as follows:

"That in the opinion of this conference the interests of the empire demand that in so far as practicable its different portions should be connected by the best possible means of mail communication, travel and transportation; that to this end it is advisable that Great Britain should be connected with Canada, and through Canada with Australia and New Zealand, by the best service available within reasonable cost; that for the purpose of carrying the above project into effect such financial support as may be necessary should be contributed by Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in equitable proportions."

"Now, some of the members of the press in Canada have asked what is the scheme known as the All-Red route. How did it originate? Where did it come from? Well, this is the scheme and this is where it originated; in the passing of this resolution by the conference. All the parties to the conference agreed to the resolution, so that this resolution is the unanimous expression of opinion of all the participants in the conference. Therefore, we may take it as fairly and definitely settled that Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia have committed themselves to the principle of an improvement in their means of communication, the greatest and the best improvement that can be made at reasonable expense."

"My business took me to England last fall, and before going there I had some conversation with my right hon. friend the prime minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) upon the subject, and as I had taken a great interest in the matter, it was arranged that I should informally and unofficially, do what could be done to promote the movement in favor of carrying out this resolution. I think the House will readily understand that there are a great many things to be done before a formal resolution of this kind will result in anything practical being done. There are divers interests to conciliate or overcome, there is a vast amount of ignorance upon the various departments of the subject to dissipate, and there are difficulties of an international character in regard to negotiations to overcome. Then there was the question—a very serious question in Great Britain—whether public opinion would justify the government of that country in undertaking the financial support of this scheme."

England Will Help.

"While all the different governments were united in their declaration of a desire to carry out this proposition, it would be a very different thing, as we all can understand, before they could be asked to agree upon a definite proposition as to how much should be spent, how it should be spent and to what definite purposes it should be devoted. I think the position of things in England improved somewhat during the last year, and I did what I could to bring about the improvement during the visit I made to London. I had the opportunity of discussing the subject, unofficially and informally, with the president of the board of trade, Mr. Lloyd-George, and on several occasions with the chancellor of the exchequer. The conversations we had, of course, could not be repeated, in any event, as they were not official or formal, they could not be made the basis of an engagement. But I may say without indiscretion that I feel satisfied as a result of what I saw that when Canada, Australia and New Zealand go to the government of Great Britain with a definite proposition they can count on not only serious, but sympathetic consideration for that proposition. That is as far as one can go in connection with the subject, and as far as we would expect anyone to go, even though we did bring it formally before them at an earlier stage of the negotiations."

The Object in View

"Now in reality, what was the scheme which the delegates of the imperial conference had in mind when they brought up this subject? They had something definite in mind, though it was not set out in the resolution. What they had in mind was a service from Great Britain to Canada of steamboats equal in equipment and service to the best upon the Atlantic and giving an average speed of twenty-four knots. They had in mind, also,

the idea of the fastest possible service across Canada, and a service from Vancouver to New Zealand and thence to Australia, by ships of about 9,000 tons burden, making an average speed of eighteen knots on the Pacific. That is what they had in mind and the calculations that have been made and the discussions that have been held have been based upon the idea that the service would be of that class."

"As matters stand at present New Zealand is very badly served in regard to her mail service. The service by way of San Francisco has broken down entirely and at present New Zealand gets her mail by way of Australia, the service taking thirty-eight days from London, England, to New Zealand. The service by the plan proposed would take the mail from London to the Canadian ports in less than five days, to Vancouver in nine days, and from London to New Zealand in not more than twenty-five days. Thus New Zealand would gain thirteen days in her mail service. Australia would not gain anything in time, because her service goes the other way, but she would have an alternative route which would be of considerable value to her. I may say on that point it is admitted by all parties that the route for this Pacific service must be by way of New Zealand to Australia."

Pacific Plain Sailing.

"There are technical steamship reasons for that, but the fact is admitted that if you are to have a fast service from Vancouver it must go to New Zealand first and then to Australia. There are no difficulties upon the Pacific in regard to this service—that is, no natural difficulties; the natural difficulties are all upon the Atlantic side."

"There are a number of things that have to be considered in connection with the service. The first series of questions which we have to consider—which I do not desire to discuss at length, but only briefly to mention—relate to the physical side. Calculations have been made, and discussions have been carried on on the basis of the service being from Liverpool to Halifax in winter, and from Liverpool to Quebec in the summer. I have no desire to express any opinion on the subject as to where the terminal points should be. If I were to venture to express an opinion on that subject that opinion would be the one I have already expressed—that the winter port should be at Halifax and the summer port at Quebec. But, obviously, no one can be committed to that at the present time. The governments of Great Britain and Canada have to act on the subject, and they have to agree with the company in regard to the transaction of the business, and then will be time enough for the question of ports to be settled. Meantime, we can only discuss it hypothetically on the basis of these ports, and consider how we can meet any difficulty that may be raised in regard to the physical questions of the case."

Canadian Route Shorter

"Now the distance from Liverpool to Halifax is 2,485 knots; from Liverpool to Quebec, south of Cape Race, 2,807 knots; Liverpool to Quebec, via Belle Isle, 2,633 knots. From Liverpool to New York by the shortest actual route is 3,026 knots. Thus, Halifax has an advantage of 541 knots over New York; Quebec, by the southern route, has an advantage of 225 knots, and by the Belle Isle route, of 393 knots. Now the computation of time for the best steamers is generally made from Daunt's rock, just outside of Queenstown, to Sandy Hook. While this affords a mode of comparing the performances of different vessels, it does not give us much information as to what the actual length of the voyage is in time."

"As a matter of fact, in a 24-knot boat going from Liverpool to Halifax and allowing four hours for loss of time and delays in getting away, one would go in four days and twelve hours; from Liverpool to Quebec via Belle Isle, allowing six hours for delays, we go in four days and twenty hours; from Liverpool to Quebec via Cape Race we go in five days and six hours. The actual time of the Lusitania, when she first broke the record on the Atlantic, was five days, eighteen hours and fourteen minutes, and I think she has clipped an hour or two off that since. So the time saved between Liverpool and New York and Liverpool and Halifax would be a whole day and six hours, via Cape Race twelve hours, via Belle Isle twenty-two hours. That gives the actual saving in time, taking it for granted that you have a boat of the same class as regards speed as the Lusitania or the Mauretania."

Smaller Boat, But Speedy

"Now, as to the possibility of getting a boat of that kind there can be no serious question, because I have in my possession, for the purpose of getting information on the subject, a definite offer from a company whose ability to construct a vessel like that is beyond question. The mere mention of the name would be quite sufficient to satisfy everybody. I have a definite offer for the construction of a vessel of 20,000 tons, equipped in every respect as the Lusitania or the Mauretania and capable of making 24 knots in ordinary weather, or a 25-knot boat. So it would not be necessary to have a boat constructed the size of the Mauretania or Lusitania in order to get a speed of 24 knots."

"That is a most important point, because we could not put a boat of that size upon the Canadian route, there would not be sufficient traffic for it. I may say upon the question of the cost of ships that an estimate was secured from a responsible firm at the request of one of the officers of the Canadian govern-

ment that there might be definite information on the subject."

"There has been a good deal of discussion regarding the physical difficulties of the route. I had occasion to make some remarks in London on that phase of the question and at once a very serious discussion arose as to the accuracy of the statements I had made, and the hostility of a certain portion of the press became distinctly manifest. When it is remembered that the insurance underwriters have a distinct interest in maintaining a certain position in regard to Canadian traffic it will be evident what the source of some of the hostility is. I took the trouble to go very carefully through the press criticisms of the remarks and examine again the sources of the information and I did not see that any successful attempt had been made to controvert the substantial accuracy of what I had said. What I said was substantially this, that so far as the question of fogs is concerned upon this route between Halifax and Liverpool that had been fully and

Thoroughly Investigated.

by the American hydrographic survey, and we were in a position to know, not to surmise, but to know by actual observation of the most careful and scientific character what was the prevalence of fog upon the Canadian route and what was the prevalence of fog upon the American route, and what the relative percentage of fog is. The hydrographic survey have fog charts prepared, in which they show the percentage of fog during the days when fog is met with. You can draw a line upon these charts from Halifax to Liverpool, from Halifax to New York and from Halifax to Quebec, and the line will run, through a series of squares, which are marked showing the percentage of fog upon these particular days, and you can average out the exact percentage of fogs which any vessel will meet in certain months in the year by going along that line."

"I think those members of the House who have not given special attention to the subject will be gratified to know that the tabulated result of the comparison shows that the average fog on the Canadian route is three and a half per cent., and the average on the New York route is eight per cent. As a matter of fact the heaviest fog is just outside New York for a short distance eastward. On the New York route the maximum fog averaged a quarter of a voyage, dividing the voyage into quarters so as to get as large a scope of comparison as possible. The New York quarter maximum fog average is twenty-two and a half per cent., and the Canadian maximum is twenty-three per cent. On the New York the maximum on the whole voyage is sixteen per cent., and the Canadian maximum eleven per cent., so the idea that the short route from Canada is seriously impeded by fog from Halifax eastward is an entire mistake. As a matter of fact there is twice as much fog on the American route as on the Canadian route."

Mr. Foster—"I would like to ask my hon. friend how long a period these averages are based upon?"

Mr. Sifton—"I cannot answer my hon. friend exactly. I will get him the chart so that he may acquire definite information. But it goes back for a considerable length of time and is worked out very carefully. That is the percentage given at the hydrographic office at Washington."

Sam Hughes—"Has the hon. gentleman any record of the distance from the shore to the fog bank on the United States route and those on the Canadian route?"

Mr. Sifton—"The chart is a map of the ocean and the percentage of fog is shown in little units upon the surface of the water so that you can see exactly what there is and what is the percentage."

Sam Hughes—"Is it nearer the Canadian or the American shore; in other words, are the dense fog banks nearer the Canadian or the American shore?"

Mr. Sifton—"The American fog does not extend further than just inside the gulf of St. Lawrence, or in the neighborhood. The geographer of the government is making a thorough investigation. He has not yet got the information, but from a conversation I had with him a little while ago I think the result will show that there is not a large percentage of fog even in the gulf, and we shall be agreeably disappointed when the results of that enquiry are carefully tabulated."

"I have referred to the matter because I found in London a most determined stand taken by everybody with whom I discussed the question of fogs. They seem to have the idea, which it is almost impossible to eradicate, that the Canadian route, the further north you go, the worse you find the fog; where, as a matter of fact, the further north you go the less fog you find upon the ocean."

Ice Question Not Serious

"Then there is the question of ice. I discussed that very fully and had others discuss that with the C.P.R. authorities. As a matter of fact there is no serious difficulty on the subject of ice at all. The captain of the Empress of Ireland, who is a most experienced and competent man, told me that the ice did not give him any embarrassment; that it merely had the effect, from December to May, of requiring a slight deviation to the south. The ice comes down by the coast of Newfoundland, and from December to May there is necessarily a slight deviation to the south, growing a little more each month until the month of May and then they are able to take a more northerly route again. So all the na-

vigators agree that there is no serious danger to be apprehended from the subject of ice."

"On the subject of losses on the St. Lawrence, we had considerable discussion in London. An attempt was made to show that the statistics that were furnished by those who advocate this route were not reliable. I went to the office of the board of trade with Mr. White, the Canadian geographer, and we went carefully through all the statistics furnished by the board of trade with the result that it was shown that the figures we had given were substantially accurate."

"The difficulty is this, that when they are talking about losses on the St. Lawrence route, they count in against you every little coasting vessel that happens to run against a rock. Everything in the shape of a vessel of more than a few hundred tons is counted a vessel lost on the St. Lawrence. You do not find this on any other route in the world. A vessel going out of New York harbor and, perhaps running into the coast a hundred miles north of New York is not counted against the New York route, but they follow some such system on the St. Lawrence route, and it takes a careful examination of this to show the real facts in connection with the St. Lawrence route."

"The truth of the matter is that from 1880 to 1907, between Quebec and Liverpool, and between Halifax and Liverpool, which are the routes of which we are talking, only five passenger vessels, properly speaking, were lost, and passenger vessels are, of course, all we have to consider. That is not a bad record. Upon investigation three of these were shown to have been lost on account of lack of experience or lack of care on the part of the navigators. One was lost in such a way that we may fairly consider the loss was due to the dangers of the route. One other was lost in such a way that an investigation showed that if proper soundings had been taken the vessel could not have been lost. Thus from 1880 to 1907 on this route only one passenger vessel properly so called, has been lost owing to the dangers of the route. Obviously the question of the dangers of the route have been exaggerated by the opponents of the scheme."

Cost of Undertaking.

"Careful investigation has been made for the purpose of ascertaining the cost of such a service as I have been speaking of; and while it is very difficult to arrive at a very clear conclusion on the subject, an effort has been made to make the calculation as definite as possible, and I think the conclusion which has been arrived at is a safe and reasonable conclusion, and will be found to be justified by fact if an attempt is made to justify them. It is estimated that a 24 knot weekly service between Great Britain and Canada of the character I have spoken of and a fortnightly service between Vancouver and New Zealand and Sydney, Australia, would in the whole cost for subsidy £1,000,000 per annum. It has been suggested that a reasonable allocation of the proportions of that million pounds sterling to various contracting parties would be: Australia, £75,000; New Zealand, £100,000; Canada, £325,000; Great Britain, £500,000, thus the three colonies concerned would contribute one-half the total amount of the subsidy and Great Britain the other half."

Awaits Definite Action.

"I think it can safely be said that New Zealand is willing to give £100,000. As to Australia, it is not so clear what her present position is. Great Britain awaits a definite proposal on the part of the colonies concerned. Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and we may therefore say that the present position of the project is that it awaits definite action on the part of the government and parliament of Canada looking to the co-operation of New Zealand and Australia, and then to a definite proposition being presented to the government of Great Britain. At the present time, judging from the payments of last year, we pay about \$80,000 a year for the Canadian-Australian service and for the Atlantic mail service, so that by the proposed distribution we would have to pay in addition to what we are paying now, for these services, from \$900,000 to \$950,000. That, therefore, would represent the amount of money which Canada would have to pay in order to bring about this very greatly improved service."

"When you come to consider the various arguments that may be advanced in favor of this proposal you enter at once upon a very large field a field that I for myself do not propose to enter this afternoon. Briefly, I think it may be conceded that the growth of Great Britain and Canada and of Australia and of New Zealand has now arrived at that stage which justifies the people of these countries in coming to the conclusion that they are entitled to have the best service and best methods of communication that modern skill and modern science will enable them to have. They are all great and healthy, all increasing in prosperity, and having united themselves together in an imperial organization they at the same time declare it is in the best interests of the organization that the best possible means of communication should prevail between these countries. It is absolutely a question for the different component parts of the empire to consider whether they are willing to pay the price."

"So far as Canada is concerned what may be said to be the argument in favor of it from a commercial standpoint you can put in two or three ways. At the present time the mail, passenger and freight service of the best and quickest character from here to Great Britain

goes through the States, and from Australia and New Zealand goes across the continent of Europe; it does not go by our ports or our own territory. In other words, so far as travel and transportation are concerned Canada is on the side street instead of the main thoroughfare. What this proposition means is that Canada shall be put upon the thoroughfare, instead of remaining on the side street. If I argued for a month I could not make it any plainer than that; all the great social, political and commercial advantages which come from being upon the main avenue would come to Canada if this scheme were carried into effect."

"There have been, and there will be, objections of a serious and difficult character to overcome. It has been said that certain corporations of an influential character are opposed to it. That is so, to some extent, in Great Britain as in Canada. I have seen statements made, for instance, by men connected with the C.P.R., that indicated in some degree hostility to the project. To what extent their hostility goes I am not in a position to say, but the railway companies have been opposed to things in Canada before and these things have, nevertheless, come to pass. The G.T.R. was not in the early days very much enamored of the building of the C.P.R., but the C.P.R. was built; and in later days, perhaps, the C.P.R. was not very much enamored of the building of the G.T.P., but the G.T.P. will be built. Thus, you cannot always look for guidance to the gentlemen who control the destinies of these great companies; and I, for my part, feel very hopeful that if the matter is approached in a proper way we shall not have hostilities on the part of these gentlemen or of the C.P.R. or any other railroad company in Canada. On the contrary, I hope that if the governments of the colonies concerned met with the government of Great Britain and agreed upon a proper basis and decided upon the inauguration of this service, some means could be devised whereby the C.P.R. and the G.T.R. and the C.N.R. and the I.C.R. would all join together for the purpose of making this scheme the great success it ought to be, and if they do this with the influence that will be placed behind it I have no doubt there will be very little difficulty in making it that success."

"I shall not attempt to discuss the project in detail nor to give the reasons, many of which will occur to any one, in support of the project, but I have thought that the time had come to make a few remarks upon the subject and to state the position as it is today in the hope that interest may thereby be further excited in the subject and that the government may feel itself justified at an early date in taking a decided position in connection with this subject."

PITY THE POOR FARMER

Not January, but spring time is the beginning of the farmer's year, when earth throws off the winter's sleep to the call of the south-west wind and the hills tremble in the vaporous haze with the sheen of a bridal veil. Only yesterday, the trees swung bare to blustering March wind. Suddenly, one morning when you awaken, the voice in the branches is no longer a complaining. It is a singing—a low singing—a crooning that sends you harking back to your youngster dreams, a chant of all the inarticulate things of life voicing gladness, and when you look out of your window—why, the thing is magic. Only last night, the trees were naked as antlers, and this morning between you and the sky, they are clothing in a cobwebby network, part vapor, part sunlight, with the tiny buds red as rubies, where the little green leaflets are ready to burst their sheath, and a robin is sitting on the topmost branch splitting his throat in a three-time note that is a bugle challenge of happiness to the whole wide world."

Plainly, magic has happened during the night. The magic is spring. And the farmer hitches up his team of heavy draughts for the plough. The year is at its promise. He is going out to accept that promise to him. "Poor farmer," the man in the blue jeans has been called because he has to follow a furrow in top boots, while other men slave in offices shut away from an outdoor world. "Sir," exclaimed a little old farmer, who had spent his entire eighty years on a back township of Ontario, as he talked with a town man about the wonders of nature, "Sir, this is not mere living. . . . It is existence glorified. We should live, sir, we should live in a perfect ecstasy in such a world." No self pity in that tone. And what would he pity himself for? As he fares forth, the whole world is to the farmer an open book, if he will but read its pages; every field an artist's picture, if the tiller of the soil has but the eyes to see. The big hawks are wheeling and screaming overhead, for it is the mating season; and invisible as a mote on a sea of blue is the meadow lark sending down his love song of flute notes.—Agnes C. Laut, in The Outing Magazine.

Did you ever notice how a piper prances up and down as he pipes? He never sits, he never stands still, but up and down, round and round, to and fro, he struts continually. A little boy, listening to the weird skirl of the bagpipes of a street performer, once said to his father:

"Father, why does the piper keep on the move all the time he plays?"

"I can't say, my boy," the father answered, "unless it is to prevent anyone getting the range with a cobblestone."—Washington Herald.