

POLITICAL PARTY OPPOSITION TO THE COMPANY'S CLAIM.

On this point the Sub-Committee make a statement which is calculated to mislead those who are not conversant with the facts. In the paragraph (see page 21) in which the Sub-Committee speak of the Bill before the House in March, 1896, as having been withdrawn—which was not the fact—they also say

“In the debate former objections were renewed and opposition was made to the scheme by members on both sides of the House. The Sub-Committee desire this point to be carefully noted, as some of the statements issued by the Company are calculated to convey the impression that the opposition to the enterprise was of a political character.”

In the debates referred to there was, besides Mr. Baird, only one Conservative member who raised objections to the scheme, which, coming as they did five years after we had expended our capital on it, were totally irrelevant. And the belated remarks of these two members furnish no adequate justification for the Sub-Committee referring to opposition on the Conservative as well as the Liberal side of the House. This explanation is, therefore, necessary. We not only desired to convey the impression that there was now political opposition to the enterprise and to our claims, but I say it is true, and I will prove it. In the beginning all Canada was in favour of the original Baie Verte Canal scheme being carried out. Both parties, when in power, voted money for it, and when the scheme was given up in 1878 on account of the uncertainty as to cost, the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, then Premier, said that if it was possible to execute the work at a cost corresponding to the estimate, say five million dollars, they were ready to call for tenders. The Liberal Government of that day—the political predecessors of the present Administration—were therefore willing to spend five million dollars of Government money in constructing the Ship Canal if it could have been done for this sum. Mr. Ketchum's proposal for a Ship Railway followed immediately afterwards, and was approved and adopted by a Conservative Government for the reasons already stated, one of which was that the subsidy would cost the Government less than one half of five million dollars. In the beginning there was therefore no party opposition to the Ship Canal scheme, nor to the Ship Railway, nor was there any in the subsequent debates in Parliament on the different Acts. I have already described what took place when the Acts from 1882 to 1888 were before Parliament, which were all passed for the original Canadian Incorporators. There was no division on the Bill of 1891 to extend the time to complete the Railway for one year, nor on the Bill of 1892 giving the Company authority to issue Preference Bonds with which to raise capital to complete the work, except in the Senate, where a hostile amendment was moved by Senator Almon, of Halifax, who, as on the former occasion, found only six supporters. The party opposition to which I refer was not particularly noticeable until 1896, when it became active, and during the debates on the 9th March and 26th March on the private Bill of the Company to renew the Charter, we were subjected to the vilest abuse. I asked members how it was that such language was applied to a body of investors, not one of whom, save myself, knew anything whatever about their political parties, and several of them told me the language was not intended for us. “Chignecto is a stick with which to beat the Conservative Government,” said one, and the others