

THE CROW'S NEST DEAL.

Private Hands Now Hold Coal Lands
Granted to Build the Road.

ORDER OF EVENTS.

In 1886 coal is discovered in the Crow's Nest Pass on the British Columbian side of the Rocky mountains.

In 1887 Col. Baker, a member of the British Columbia Legislature, visits the Pass and satisfies himself as to the great extent and value of the coal beds.

Sir William (then plain Mr.) Van Horne's attention is drawn to these coal deposits, and his answer is that the Canadian Pacific Railway has no interests in that part of the country.

In 1888 the British Columbia Southern Railway Company, including Col. Baker, M. P. P., and others, is granted a charter by the Provincial Government to construct a railway from the summit of the Pass to Kootenay Lake, a distance of about 170 miles.

To guarantee construction, the company, by way of subsidy, secures a liberal land grant from the Government of British Columbia, which grant includes all the coal lands in the Pass, subject, some say, to a royalty of five cents per ton.

In 1890 the Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company, composed of the gentlemen who made up the British Columbia Southern Railway Company, is organized.

This company within a company purchases 10,000 acres of the coal lands and afterwards secures from the B. C. S. Railway Company control of over 300,000 acres of coal land, in fact, all the coal land of the subsidy.

In 1891 the promoters of the British Columbia Southern Railway Company are prevented from floating their project by the underhand influence of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In 1892 efforts are made to interest capitalists in London, New York and San Francisco in the B. C. Southern project, but C. P. R. influence is adverse and opposition strong enough to prevent anything being done.

In 1893 time limit in the charter for the commencement of work expires; Government of British Columbia, of which Col. Baker has become a member, grants an extension; on passage of the bill, Col. Baker magnanimously abstains from voting.

In 1894 arrangements made in east for funds and surveys are put to work; general financial depression comes, fund is exhausted and work ceases.

Canadian Pacific influence still a formidable obstacle in way of the B. C. S. promoters.

In 1895 second extension of time is granted the B. C. S. Company and Provincial Legislature is told that the Dominion Government has been asked for a subsidy to enable the company to open up the coal lands of the Crow's

Nest Pass, with every prospect of success.

Dominion subsidy defeated by C. P. R. influences, it is charged, the company fully dominating the late Government. B. C. S. promoters see that they cannot hope for anything from Conservative Government at Ottawa, where the C. P. R. rules.

In 1896 Liberal Government comes into power at Ottawa. British Columbia Southern promoters identify Senator Cox and Mr. Robert Jaffray, with their enterprise.

In 1897 the British Columbia Southern, successful in transferring the B. C. charter to Canadian Pacific Railway for \$5,000 or some such sum.

No coal lands go with the charter; the Crow's Nest Coal Company, composed of Col. Baker, Hon. Minister of Mines in the British Columbia Government, and others, retain possession of the coal lands which were granted to provide for the construction of the road.

The "Globe" and Liberal press of Ontario, with a few exceptions like the Hamilton "Times," disapproves of a movement to disallow and cancel the charter of the British Columbia Southern Railway, and to use the coal lands so as to have the railway constructed by the Dominion Government as a national railway with which any other railway would have the right to connect.

The C. P. R. uses its influence to secure from the Dominion Government a money subsidy to help the C. P. R. to build the Crow's Nest Pass Railway.

Dominion Government, having refused, in defiance of public opinion widely expressed, in the House and out of it, to disallow the B. C. S. charter, hesitates about the subsidy; but the influence of the C. P. R. and its backers prevails, and the Government finally agrees to pay the Canadian Pacific Railway \$10,000 cash subsidy per mile for construction of the railway, approximately 310 miles long.

Canadian Pacific Railway, which did not receive an acre of coal land with the charter, agrees to transfer 50,000 acres of coal lands to the Government as a mark of esteem for that generous and considerate body.

The Crow's Nest Pass Coal Company enters into full enjoyment of its rights of ownership in the 300,000 acres of coal land which British Columbia granted originally for the purpose of building a railway.

SUMMARY.

The people of British Columbia, through their representatives in the Legislature, grant the most valuable coal finds in the world to a railway company as a subsidy to ensure the construction of a railway which would be beneficial to the country.

The railway company secures possession of the land, does not construct the

railway, and sells the charter.

The coal land passes into the hands of a coal company formed within the railway company.

The people of Canada are called upon to pay upwards of \$3,000,000 in cash for the construction of the line.

Thus the land is alienated from the public domain; it is in possession of men who got it for nothing, or at least gave the Province nothing for it, and will use it for personal profit; it was given to the predecessors of these men to enable them to construct a public work, and they retain it for their own gain; and the people have to pay over \$3,000,000 additional for the railway, which the price of the coal lands would have built many times over had they been sold at their value.

BEAUTIES OF NON-PARTISAN
GOVERNMENT.

The historian of British Columbia, if he have no stock in the coal company or privileges from the railways, which might be jeopardised, will have to face the naked fact that the political methods that prevailed there towards the end of the nineteenth century were not such as those who look for and respect good government would wish to see perpetuated. In a sparse and scattered population given to much moving about, a few men of mediocre capabilities thrust themselves to the front without question, and carried on government there in a manner to imply contempt for their responsibilities to the people. There was not much money to squander, but the generous way in which public lands were distributed is indication that a full treasury, had there been one, would not have been vigilantly guarded. The Canadian Pacific Railway entered the Province with a right to twenty miles on each side of the line, and with a disposition to ignore public wishes and public rights wherever it could safely evade them. There can be no objection to the land grant under the circumstances, but there is, and must always be, objection to that contrary disposition of the monopoly which manifests itself in its treatment of the public, through whose generosity in land and money the company enriched itself. Sir Sandford Fleming's survey through the Yellowhead Pass may not have been an easy route for a railway from an engineering point of view, but it can safely be said that it would have proved easier than the route through the Kicking Horse. But there was another route through the mountains, the easiest of all routes, it was known then and has since been found to be, and that is the route by the Crow's Nest Pass, which was rejected, it is said, because the Government desired to keep the line a distance north of the International boundary. The gradients there are insignificant, and had the Cana-