

to finish it. The work has cost, I understand, \$800,000 or \$900,000. It was begun as far back as 1881, under the advice of the late John Page, who was the chief engineer of canals at the time. It has been going on for a series of years, and recently the minister had made up his mind that it was wise to complete it. He therefore put in his estimates this sum of \$25,000 to pay this past claim of the Gilbert Company, and he also proposed in the main estimates a further appropriation with a view of finishing the work.

Mr. REID (Grenville). I may say, Mr. Speaker, that I have raised objection to this work at different times in this House, but of course the present acting minister (Hon. Mr. Fielding) does not understand the position of affairs as well as the late minister, who had been in charge of the department. I wish to explain now the whole position of this matter. The contract was let by the government in power in 1878 (not in 1881) to make this channel through the Galops rapids. It was originally let to Wm. Davis & Sons, and they assigned it to this Gilbert firm. They continued this contract for a few years under the late Mr. Page and succeeded—at least as they claimed—in making a channel 200 feet wide through these rapids. When the Hon. Mr. Haggart took charge of the Railway Department he came to the conclusion, after examination, that it would be an impossibility for steamers to use this channel even though it were widened and deepened as proposed, and so he changed the plans and built a lock adjoining the rapids which steamers could use in navigating that part of the St. Lawrence. That lock has been used ever since its completion, a few years ago, and it has overcome the obstruction to navigation presented by these rapids. The whole trouble with the channel is that it has been constructed across the current, and even though it were the required depth, which I claim it is not, it would be impossible for large steamers to navigate that channel with safety. That statement can be verified by the fact that even though the channel were 200 feet wide and had a depth of 17 feet—which I claim it has not—no insurance company in Canada or elsewhere would insure any vessel navigating this channel. Let me give a little information as to what lead the Hon. Mr. Haggart to come to the conclusion that the construction of this channel was not a proper work. While this channel was being constructed the vessel men who used it were continually protesting against the work and advocating the construction of a new lock. I will read some of the letters of protest that were sent to the government. I have here a letter addressed to the Rt. Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald by Mr. Henderson, manager of the Montreal Transportation Company,

Hon. Mr. FIELDING.

which is one of the largest forwarders in this country. The letter is as follows:—

Montreal Transportation Company.

Kingston, October 21, 1879.

Sir John A. Macdonald, K.C.B.

Dear Sir, A circumstance has come to my knowledge this evening which I think is my duty to acquaint you of.

I was discussing with one of our best pilots the question of running the Galops Rapids with our barges and the difficulties attending same, and he mentioned that the government intended to commence work next spring and make a channel on the south side, and he remarked that it was a very expensive affair, and when made he would rather use the present channel as it now is, than attempt to take a tow through the new one when made, and the best improvement that could be made would be to remove a certain shoal that runs out on the north side of the present channel, which could be done at one-fifth of what the new channel will cost, and if that shoal was removed it would give them a straight run down, and they could take any reasonable number of barges down the Galops. This thing certainly should be looked into and we would recommend to you before undertaking the said improvement to call into your council a given number of the principal pilots that run the river. Engineers may be all very good in their way, but we would say that the pilots know best what would help the trade, and if you can make one dollar do more real good than five, by taking their advice why not do so? Don't let this matter be overlooked for I would be sorry to see a repetition of the former blunders recently made in the board of works.

Yours very truly,

(Sgd.) P. K. HENDERSON.

Here is another letter from Mr. D. D. Calvin:

Kingston, Canada,

Garden Island, October 29, 1879.

Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, Ont.

Gentlemen,—I telegraphed the Board of Works on 27th in relation to the removing of the large rock in the channel of the Galops rapids (below Prescott) and as I have not received any answer I take the liberty of writing. What induced me to telegraph you was when I was in Ottawa a few days ago there was a man offered me two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to remove the rock. I wanted to find out if he had the right to let the job. There is no work on the River St. Lawrence that requires attention as much as the removal of that rock and in high water it is doubtful if it can be removed at all. The water now is three feet lower than an ordinary draft in midsummer, besides in midsummer it would block the channel to the injury of commerce. Excuse egotism but I think your ministry might be benefited by my presence before them for fifteen minutes to explain matters in relation to this subject.

(Sgd.) D. D. CALVIN.

I may say that the rock referred to in this letter was never removed; it is a different work altogether that was done. The following is a petition that was addressed to the hon. Commissioner of Works at Ottawa: