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THE CARBONEAR HERALD

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

MONDAY, March 15.

Continued.

Mr. Tessier regretted to have to express his indignation at the manner in which these petitions and the petitioners were received by hon. gentlemen opposite. The hon. Mr. Shea spoke contemptuously of the petitioners, and characterized their arguments as flimsy and unworthy of consideration. (Mr. T.) would assure the hon. gentlemen that there were names appended to that, whose opinions on general matters of trade, equalled in weight to those of any hon. member of this House, and whose knowledge of even the public finances, was not inferior to that of the hon. gentleman himself, who assumes to controvert the Receiver General's views and purposes, and who is particularly the Government in himself. (Mr. T.) had no hesitation in saying that, taking all circumstances into account, the Receiver General would have a revenue for the current year of not less than \$1,060,000, supposing that the 15 per cent is retained. On what principal then does the hon. gentleman propose such enormous taxation on the people when according to his own official statement he requires a much less sum to carry on the affairs of the colony? As Mr. Tessier proposed returning to this subject again before the debate closes he would not further detain the house at present, than by strongly protesting against the retention of this burdensome and unnecessary tax.

Hon. Mr. Shea thought that the hon. member who had just sat down was mistaken in some of his statements, and especially so in reference to the treatment of the petitioners before the House asking for the remission of the 15 per cent. He (Mr. S.) was not aware that any want of respect was shown to the petitioners. They do not necessarily show them any disrespect because they may differ with them in opinion. Would the Government, he would ask, be bound to swallow the demands of every petition submitted to them by petitioners without exercising an independent opinion? If they do not, they would be unworthy the positions they hold as custodians of the public trust. The hon. member's disclaiming any connection with settling up these positions. He was not accused of it, and suppose he did, it would be a legitimate and proper exercise of his privileges. The hon. gentleman concluded as follows:—suppose, for instance, that counterpoitions were presented to this House asking that this 15 per cent should not be removed. Last year there was a petition presented by those interested in the Boot and Shoe Factory, asking for a protective duty upon leatherware; there was another petition against it. The House could not accede to the request of the two seats of petitioners. The House dealt with them simply upon their merits, as they had a right to do, and as they have done it the present instance. The whole question at issue resolves itself into this:—Are you by the abolition of the 15 per cent, proposing to place the Receiver General at the end of the year at the wrong side of the account. He did not think that hon. members wished to do that, nor did he think the hon. Receiver General would permit them to do it. A more unholily ostentatious crusade could not have been carried on against any public functionary than hon. members have, for the past few days, carried on against the Receiver General relative to this matter in debate; and his only surprise is that the Receiver General

looks so well. If hon. members are really interested in the welfare and prosperity of the country, they will hereafter rejoice that they did not succeed on the occasion in depriving the Government of that grave responsibility which now rests upon them of carrying out large measures of progress.

Hon. Surveyor General, (Mr. Donnelly) had no opportunity at an earlier stage in this debate of offering any observation on the subject matter under consideration; and the lateness of the hour had nearly precluded him from offering any observations upon it at all. But the hon. member for St. John's West, Mr. Tessier, had made some statements to the accuracy of which he (Mr. T.) not only committed his own judgment and opinion, of the general trade. These statements, or more properly unconscious misrepresentations he (hon. S.G.) cannot permit to pass by unchallenged and unrefuted. In the first instance he (Mr. T.) claims that we will have, during the current year, a very marked increase in the quantity of "ad valorem" goods imported into this market; and also that the "ad valorem" goods will be of enhanced value as compared with a similar class of goods imported in 1878 and 1879. On neither side of these points could he (hon. S.G.) agree with the hon. member who presented the petition. In the first place such a statement is a mere matter of speculative opinion, based on no facts or reliable data, and to likely to be demolished by the stern logic of events; what is in the second place, if we contrast the known increase of any one year with another, we will find that in no case do the importations of a given year rise in excess of another year by twenty per cent. That a revival in trade has taken place on the other side of the water he was free to admit, but that that revival would necessarily affect the purchases of our importers, he (hon. S.G.) considered extremely doubtful. Large orders had been sent home in January which would be filled to a considerable extent at last year's ruling prices, and if there should be any advance at all, it can scarcely exceed from five to ten per cent on importations. There are, it is true, rumors of a probable rise in the value of particular lines of goods in the home market, and it is likely enough should this prove the case that many commercial men will duplicate their orders and judiciously increase their spring stocks. But this, most of course result in a diminished importation of ad valorem goods, to meet the actual requirement. It is highly probable, however, that if the prices are higher we are likely to have a very much larger importation. Neither do low prices and increased importations preserve an invariable sequence. There are other and more important factors that must have a place in our calculations. If the aggregate produce of the country materially increases, and if the prices obtainable for foreign market for produce, in a word, remunerative and profitable, in a word, if prosperity is the rule among our people, then may reasonably calculate upon somewhat larger importations, no matter whether the prices at which our goods are purchased abroad are high or comparatively low. Ho (hon. S.G.) did not at present see any probability of such increase. During the past few years the foreign markets that are open to our produce have been exceptionally high, and our catch of fish has been fairly prolific. Add to this that the Norwegian fishery of the current year is a large one, and we have before us some very important facts that should guide us in our estimate of the probable increase in our ad valorem importations during the present year. With the knowledge of such facts as he (hon. S.G.) had just adverted to how could it be said, with any show of reason, that the value will be an increase in our purchasing power, having a special regard to the fact of enhanced prices on all lines of ad valorem goods. For the past two or three months importers have been purchasing at the old rates, and many he was aware had duplicated their orders in view of the anticipated rise; but no one can calculate with any certainty that such a rise will be to the extent of 20 per cent as contended by the hon. member Mr. Tessier. In the past the hon. members opposite have charged the Government with having a deficit every year; and now when it is the object of the Government to keep out of debt, they are charged with unnecessary increasing the tariff. In conclusion (said the hon. Surveyor General) I unqualifiedly give my support and assent to the adoption of the Tariff of the past year.

TUESDAY, March 16.

Pursuant to adjournment, the House met to day at 3 o'clock. The Master Chancery to the Legislative Council brought down the following Message:— Bank Fishery Bill, without Amendment. Ordered that the said message do lie upon the table.

Mr. Norman presented seven petitions

from Moses Morgan and others, inhabitants of the district of Bigus and Port de Grave, praying for grants of money to open up and repair roads, streets and bridges in those settlements.

Ordered that the said several petitions do lie upon the table.

On motion of the hon. Attorney General, seconded by the hon. A. Shea, Resolved, That a select committee be appointed to consider and report as to the practicability of constructing a Railway through the district of Avalon on the basis of the survey made in 1875, with extension to ports in Conception Bay; and further, as to the extension of the said Railway north and west, if within the means of the colony and without increase to our fiscal charges; also that a message be sent to the Legislative Council asking that they appoint a select committee, to meet a select committee of the House, to consider and report as to the practicability of constructing a Railway through the district of Avalon upon the basis of the survey of 1875 with extension to ports in Conception Bay; and further, as to extension of the said Railway north and west, if within the means of the colony, and without increase to our fiscal charges.

Hon. the Premier (Mr. Whiteaway) was about to introduce for the consideration of the House a subject of very great importance as regards the future of the country, and he trusted that the result of their deliberations would be the initiation of a new epoch in the history of the country. When in 1878 he had introduced a suite of resolutions upon the subject of a Railway, the object contemplated was the construction of a road across Newfoundland to form a link in that grand chain of communication which was conceived and written of by Mr. Standford Fleming, to connect Britain with the Pacific coast by crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Newfoundland, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Canada, this being considered by him as the shortest and most expeditious route and having the advantage of crossing entirely British territory. There were those who still held the opinion that this would be the route of the line. Now, the whole of this line had done by him, with branch lines to towns on the route, would probably be about 350 miles. It had been said that a broad gauge road would probably cost from about \$20,000 to \$25,000 a mile but that was unnecessary; a three foot six inch gauge would meet all our requirements. The cheapest Railway in the world is said to be at Frankfurt in Germany. The line is five miles in length and the gauge is 2 feet 5 inches. The rolling stock consists of two engines, three passenger carriages, two goods vans and four open trucks. The locomotive weighs 7½ tons loaded with fuel (best) line of travel in the future from Britain to India and China. The resolutions which he had introduced in 1878 were warmly received by the Legislature, and among other things it was resolved that an annual subsidy of \$120,000 and liberal grants of crown lands should be made to any company which should construct and continue in operation the road across Newfoundland, connecting the coast with the interior at an Canadian line on the other across the Gulf of St. Lawrence. After a long discussion the hon. Premier concluded thus:—The road to Harbour Grace would be a part of the other. The carriages each accommodate twenty-eight passengers. The working staff consists of an engine driver, fireman, guard and plate layer, their total wages being thirteen shillings a day. The passenger fares are sixpence for first class and fourpence for second class. The charge for a cow is one shilling, sheep and pigs three-pence each and two shillings per ton for general goods. He had been informed that the work might be done for eight thousand dollars a mile while others had said \$16,000—but in the absence of data it was impossible to arrive at anything but an approximate estimate. Well, then, say, whose distance from St. John's passing head of Frimby Bay, Garnier Bay to Exploits, with Branch connections, towns in Conception Bay, and on the line..... 350 miles At \$12,000 per mile..... \$4,200,000 This would be easily obtainable at 4 per cent interest, say therefore interest per annum, \$168,000. It would be asked how was this to be made up: our coastal steam subsidy was now \$32,000. Inasmuch as the railroad would pass the head of Placem Bay, that and all communication westward could be reconciled by tapping of the road at the head of Placem Bay, saving all steam communication between that Bay and St. John's near Cape Race, a long route. Again, smaller steamers at a less subsidy would be required north, connecting places with the roads in the Bays, upon the establishment of the railway. We might fairly calculate that at the expiration of the present coastal steam contract, half

the subsidy would be saved.....	\$26,000
Conception Bay Steamer subsidy.....	8,000
Winter Coastal Service.....	2,000
Interest on Fishery Award.....	30,000
Surplus on Revenue, as per Estimate.....	22,000
Balance.....	\$88,000
	80,000
	\$168,000

Or about 44 cents per head additional taxation on the population. Would it not be a speculation if we could have this interest completed at an annual taxation of 44 cents a head additional? Now it would be observed he had made this calculation leaving all present appropriations for roads and other purposes intact, although he considered that they may fairly take \$30,000 a year from the large grant of 150,000 and appropriate the \$20,000 a year voted for general purposes improvements towards paying the interest upon this sum, which would really reduce the obligation to a very small amount. He had put this view forward as being the darkest aspect, but there was to be taken into consideration the benefit arising to the country from increased settlement and general development. In 1878 they had been quite willing to subsidize a road to the extent of \$120,000 per annum, and many would have gone to the extent of \$200,000 or \$250,000 per annum, and those who would have done so were right, for the indirect benefit would have been more than a compensation. The additional obligation now proposed was, as it were, nothing to what they would have then undertaken thus far then as regards the interest. Now came the working expenses, and here he must confess he was at a loss to set down any definite sum, but he had heard from good authority that a line might be worked, one train each way per day, at a maximum amount of \$90,000 a year for 100 miles, that the expense of working would decrease in proportion to the length of the line. He would now pray them to invoke the assistance of the great sister power—steam and endeavour to place our country on a level with others, and not to stop short on having introduced one of these civilization agencies. He moved for the appointment of a select committee to take the subject of the railway into consideration, pursuant to the terms of the notice which he had given.

Mr. Little—On seconding the motions, of a select joint committee to consider and report upon the important matter at present under consideration, he thought that the House should feel grateful to the Hon. Attorney General for the care and attention which he must have bestowed upon this measure; as evidenced from the elaborate details and statistics which he submitted for the consideration of the House. It certainly is an immense undertaking and fraught with great importance to the future in excess of the colony. The burden which will be directly cast upon the revenues of the colony, looking at it in a comparative view, would not be much felt. He very much feared, however, that the estimates submitted by the Hon. Attorney General would fall very much below the mark. He further feared that the proposition to extend this line over an extent of three hundred and fifty miles would be considered by the committee as an attempt to burden some of our means. We had imagined that the work Committee would have been confined to the proposed line connecting St. John's with the different ports in Conception Bay and in time, as the means and opportunity would offer, to extend its operations to the more remote districts. He feared, therefore, that owing to the enormous contemplated proportions of the scheme, hon. members may be deterred from entering upon this measure which he would, under a more limited character they might be induced to assume. It may possibly be that this colony would and it necessary hereafter to seek assistance outside to relieve it from an indebtedness which we can now very easily avoid. Under these circumstances it would have been the more safe and prudent course to have confined ourselves to the line to Harbour Grace which would now seem to have been abandoned.

Hon. Mr. Shea.—It is not abandoned.

Mr. Little was glad to hear it. He however, entirely approved of the present motion to refer the matter to a joint select committee of both Houses to consider and report upon this matter, the blessings to result from when have not been exaggerated. He had every confidence in the wisdom and foresight of that committee, that the greatest caution would be observed in not imposing upon the financial shoulders of the colony any unnecessary burdens which would tend to jeopardize her present independent condition.

Hon. Mr. Shea concurred fully in the remarks of the hon. and learned

member, Mr. Little, that they should feel deeply grateful to the hon. the Premier, not only for the introduction of the resolutions before the House, but also for the valuable information which he has afforded tending to open our minds to the appreciation of the practicability of the measure under consideration. He certainly was more than surprised, looking at the multifarious duties devolving upon the Hon. Attorney General, that he has been enabled to extract time sufficient to enable him to master all the details of the measure which have been so ably and elaborately placed before this House to day. He has stated, and very truly stated, that if they did not now grapple with this subject they should abandon all hopes of ever again taking it up, because our financial position is better now than ever it was in the history of the colony, or ever again likely to be.

They have hadly arrived at such a condition of things that they should consider any further improvement in our condition as a colony impracticable. If that be so their commission as legislators is at an end, and there is no further use of their being here. There is under such circumstances no future for the colony and no hope for its people. Exception has been taken to the comprehensive character of the resolutions submitted by the Hon. Attorney General. He himself should admit that he felt little of that distrust, as to the practicability of so large a scheme. He understood him to state that those larger views were those which he should like to see ultimately realized. It is better in undertakings of this kind that they should proceed slowly and very carefully. If they are sustained by the people in this measure (and he believed that they were), they should go on with greater confidence in the construction of this work of regeneration, from the fact that they are sustained by the people in a work which they are no longer satisfied to do without. This is not a matter to which the Government have pledged themselves. The Hon. Attorney General has simply submitted his own individual views upon it. His motion is to refer the matter to a Joint select Committee of both branches of the Legislature to report as to the feasibility of the measure. That committee, he had every confidence, would take every necessary circumstance into account, and they will be guided in their deliberation and find reports solely by those considerations which are likely to attend to the promotion of the welfare of the colony. With reference to the statement of the hon. and learned member Mr. Little, that they may be induced to undertake obligations which would eventually lead the colony into Confederation. In dealing with the question of Confederation he (Mr. S.) never went behind any one's back. He never would be a party to this colony going into Confederation by any such means as those insinuated. They never shall go there as beggars, if he has a voice to cry out against it. If he at the present moment believed that they, by the measure now proposed, would be ultimately compelled to knock at the doors of the Dominion for admission, he would immediately abandon it. When they (the Government) meant Confederation, they said so honestly, and they submitted the matter to the people for their decision. They decided against the government of the day, and they were obliged to accept the consequences. They have nothing to be ashamed of in that, on the contrary, they have every thing to be proud of. If they were anxious to force this colony into Confederation, an opportunity was offered by the action of hon. members a few years ago. At that time they wanted to force the Government to purchase, at an immense sum, the interest of the Anglo-American Telegraph Company in this colony. He considered that the Government were wise in not have submitted at a more opportune time, or at a time when they could be in a better position financially to deal with it. The discussion at present is perhaps a little in advance. They were now, as it were, merely upon the threshold of the undertaking.

Hon. Surveyor General (Mr. Fraser) was much pleased in coming with hon. members, who preceded him, at the able manner in which the Hon. the Premier

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