

war. For generations the people there have been handicapped in the matter of transportation and easy access to markets for the products of the farm, the mine, the forest and the sea. Since the outbreak of the war they have been deprived even of the advantage of communication by suitable boats. I do not blame the Government for this, because we all know that as a result of the war, transportation facilities by water have been very seriously curtailed, and unfortunately the peninsula of Gaspé has been handicapped in that respect.

As regards the railway problem,—and it is the problem which I intend to speak of this evening,—in 1884 the Parliament of Canada committed itself to the construction of a branch line of the Intercolonial railway extending from Matapedia, Quebec, towards Paspébiac and ultimately to Gaspé, in round figures a mileage of 202 miles. I am bound to say that the railway would have been built as part of the Intercolonial in the early eighties, if my poor electors of Gaspé and Bonaventure had not been the victims of a large fishing firm known as Robin and Company. I do not wish to minimize the commercial standing of that firm. It is a great firm, and stands in the same relation to the fishing population of the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and Labrador as that in which the Hudson Bay Company stood to the trappers of the Far West. When in the eighties it was first mooted that the Government intended building a branch line from Matapedia to Gaspé as part of the Intercolonial, immediately the firm of Robin and Company put its foot down on the project. Why? Up to that time and later in fact, the population of Gaspé and Bonaventure, a very adventurous population, had been in the employ of that firm just as the trappers and the half-breeds of the West worked for the Hudson Bay Company. The employees of the firm were forbidden to marry before a certain age, the fishermen were not allowed to buy from other stores than those of the company. Schools were scarce because the company was interested in keeping them in complete ignorance. To have given railway communications would have put them in contact with other parts of the country, thereby bringing about competition, and dissolving the close relations which had existed between this very powerful firm and the poor fishermen. Therefore the project failed, and the railway was not built until, in 1884, subsidies were voted. The Baie des Chaleurs company succeeded in building the first one hundred miles from

[Mr. Lemieux.]

Matapedia to Paspébiac. We all know the waywardness of that company. We all remember the scandals of 1890 and the investigations which took place in the Senate, and which brought about the downfall of one government at least. The railway was very poorly built, but unfortunately it stopped half way at Paspébiac. When I was elected in the year 1896—and I might remind you, Mr. Chairman, that I am twenty-four years old in this House—I was elected on the distinct pledge that I would do my very best to give the other portion of Gaspé an uninterrupted service between the Bay of Gaspé and Matapedia. It took several years before I could even gain the goodwill of my colleagues in the Government, because the reputation of the railway enterprise in that district was so unsavoury, but finally I obtained the goodwill of my colleagues in the Government and of my fellow members in the House and succeeded in getting a charter, and an English syndicate went to work and built the road from Paspébiac to Gaspé. I take pride in the fact that the road was built without any scandal, no subsidies went astray. The money all went into the road, which is one of the best equipped roads in Canada today. Unfortunately, however, there are two railways where there should be but one, and that one should be a branch line of the Intercolonial. I am bound to say that the question of a branch line of the Intercolonial between Matapedia and Gaspé was supported in the early eighties by no less a man than Sir Charles Tupper himself, who was then Minister of Railways and Canals in the old Macdonald administration. That policy, which would have been of tremendous advantage in the opening up of that country, was, unfortunately, changed. As I said a moment ago, Mr. C. N. Armstrong was allowed to build the road only in part, and another company had to run the risk of building the last one hundred miles, which it did. The two roads are linked together, but the last one hundred miles are in good condition, the first one hundred miles are in a poor condition. The road was completed in 1911, and since that time the service has been altogether inadequate, when not entirely suspended, and has been a deterrent rather than an incentive to progress. Many undertakings have been held up for years for want of a well-constructed and properly equipped and maintained road. At the present time timber out in the counties has at times to be rafted and carried by water to New Brunswick across the Baie des