

SPEECH OF MR. DECOSMOS

ON
MR. HUNTER'S SURVEY OF THE PINE RIVER PASS.

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HANSARD REPORT
McCorrected.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Wednesday, 13th March, 1878.

MR. HUNTER'S SURVEY OF THE PINE RIVER PASS.

MOTION FOR REPORTS.

MR. THOMPSON (Cariboo) moved for a copy of all reports of Mr. Joseph Hunter, C.E., in regard to the survey made by him in 1877 of the pass known as the Pine River Pass in the Rocky Mountains. He said his object in making this motion was to obtain some information as to the results of the survey made by Mr. Hunter last year. Mr. Marcus Smith's report, which was embodied in that of the Minister of Public Works, contained a sort of partial explanation as to what had been done. He would like the report asked for to be submitted to the House before any discussion thereupon took place, but he would read the following from the report made by Mr. Smith. Referring to a survey from Fort McLeod, eastward, to the valley of the River Misinchinen, an affluent of the Parsnip, he said :

"On descending the river, a stream was discovered falling into it from the north, about thirty-five miles above its confluence with the Parsnip. Following this up four miles, it was found to issue from a small lake named Azuzeta. This proved to be near the summit of the Pine River Pass, its altitude being estimated at 2,430 feet above the level of the sea. A little beyond this, the head waters of the Pine River were struck, and the river followed down eastward to the Forks, a point reached by Mr. Selwyn with a canoe from the Peace River in 1875. The exploration was continued 30 miles eastward of the Forks on to the Beaver Plains, which lie between the Rocky Mountains and Peace River. Thus the question of the feasibility of the Pine River Pass is at last solved. The full Report has not yet been received, but the distance between Fort McLeod on the west

side of the Mountains, and the Forks of Pine River on the east side, is roughly estimated at 90 miles. The gradients are stated to be generally easy, with the exception of about four miles near the summit of the Pass where they will probably be about 60 feet to the mile, and the works in the construction of a railway would be moderately light, except for a length of about eight miles near the summit of the Pass, and a short length at the Forks of Pine River, where they would be heavy. The land in the Pine River valley for 50 miles above the Forks is described as of excellent quality, and well suited for agriculture and grazing purposes. It should be observed that this fertile strip of land, lying nearly in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, is an extension of the Beaver Plains which connect with the great fertile belt stretching from Manitoba to and beyond the Peace River. Should the engineering character of a line by this route prove, on closer survey, as favourable as reported, the results from this exploration will be amongst the most important that have been obtained since the commencement of the surveys. Some of the serious difficulties in crossing the Rocky Mountains will have disappeared, and this formidable chain, once held to be insurmountable, and even now felt to be a grave obstacle to railway enterprise, can then be passed with very favourable gradients, and with works not exceeding in magnitude those generally required on other portions of the line. In addition to the manifest advantages offered by this route, there is further the important consideration that in place of a bleak sterile country, wherein settlement is an impossibility for hundreds of miles, the line would traverse an area of remarkable fertility, with but a few short intervals of country unfit for settlement. This route also passes between the vast mineral districts of Omineca and Cariboo. The extraordinary results of recent mining operations in the latter give promise, when their resources are more fully developed—as they can only be with the assistance of direct railway communication—of rivalling, if not surpassing, the far-famed gold and silver regions of the neighbouring States, which lie in the same mountain zone. The distance from Livingstone on the located line, over the Yellow-head Pass to the confluence of the Chilacoh and Stewart rivers, near Fort