

constructing the Pacific Railway, although not absolutely bound, he may yet be somewhat embarrassed by his own recorded views upon that subject. To find them, it is not needful to go beyond the limits of the letter from which I have just quoted. He continues thus:

"I entirely adopt the views enunciated by Mr. Blake respecting the Pacific Railway and our relations to British Columbia prior to his joining the Government, and if I could reasonably hope that these opinions would henceforward be those of his colleagues, I should on this subject be their supporter and follower. I consider the proposition perfectly monstrous, that for the sake of the sparse population on the Pacific Coast, the prosperity of the four millions of people east of Lake Superior should be arrested and their political independence jeopardized. No one who observes the state of the country can doubt that it is of the last importance Canada should, in its public burthens, afford a marked contrast to the United States. Cheapness is the set-off we have to offer the emigrant against the milder climate of the South. High taxation, which must be by customs duties, approximates our condition to that of the United States, must exasperate our fellow-subjects in Great Britain, and thus, by double action, weaken the ties that bind us to the Mother Country and also our inducements to maintain our own system of Government, as opposed to that of the United States. I believe nine-tenths of the people of Canada are convinced that the construction of the Pacific Railway is at this time, and will be for many long years, wholly unnecessary; they know the cost will be prodigious, and no one fit to govern the country can be ignorant of the fatal consequences of undertaking such an outlay. The frank and honest course is to tell British Columbia that the engagement was improvident and its fulfilment impossible; to offer reasonable equivalents for its abandonment, and, failing agreement, to intimate our acquiescence in her retirement from the Confederation. She cannot complain that the connection has thus far been injurious to her; she would still remain in the Empire and subject to the Queen. I do not consider between members of the same Empire public faith can be construed to entail the most disproportionate sacrifices by the greater for the less, even if not involving both in common ruin. Public faith, in my opinion, is in a much more sacred way pledged to the public creditor, and it is certain that an enormous increase of debt attended by exhaustive taxation, would most seriously affect his position."

There are other passages in this letter which are almost equally important and instructive, but it will be obvious that in the pursuit of his duties, these words will perhaps involve him in some embarrassment and difficulty. Now I wish to say there is some danger that in taking this

step we do not grasp a shadow and lose the substance. The step is one of great consequence, and we should guard against the possibility of Canada being from time to time bound and fettered by executive arrangements, concluded during the recess of Parliament under the greater facilities afforded by the establishment of the agency, while the voice of her people is unheard. We are not without experience. We remember one former occasion in particular, when we were told that great honour and advantage had been conferred upon Canada, that one of her sons was appointed to represent her on a commission in whose labours Canada was deeply concerned; and we were told afterwards that that Commissioner, being the agent of the British Government, could not act as Canada's representative in an independent capacity. I do not hesitate to say that the interests of Canada suffered severely from the circumstance that a Canadian represented her in that case. She was bound as if she had freely agreed, when in fact her representative was not free. It was a detriment instead of an advantage. My own opinion is that a more practical and important step towards the advancement of the material interests of the country, and towards the furtherance of a sound policy would be to effect an arrangement by which we should have an agent at Washington,—a man, enjoying the confidence of the people of this country, cognisant of its wants and able to facilitate by personal intercourse, commercial negotiations at Washington which would be productive of important results. Difficulties would thus be smoothed away, obstructions would be removed, misunderstandings cleared up, misapprehensions set right, and the true position set before the statesmen of the neighbouring Republic, from which would result, in my belief, a more enlightened policy on both sides, to the advantage of each. I would direct the attention of the Government to this question, as one of deep importance to this country. The only other topic to which I propose to advert is that of the contracts for the construction of 127 miles of railway in British Columbia. I desire to recall to you that, though the Government asked last Session for authority to contract for not exceeding 125 miles, this was on the understanding that the Imperial Government should be asked to give material