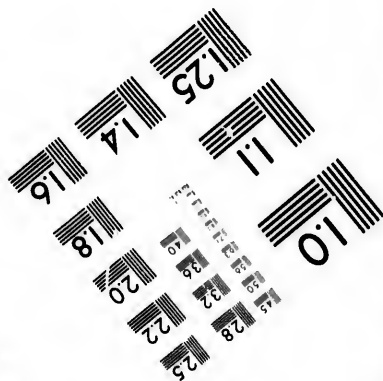
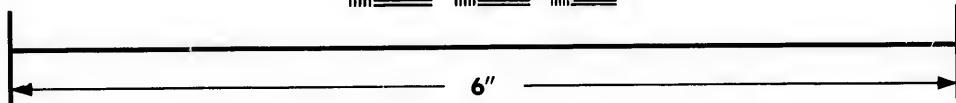
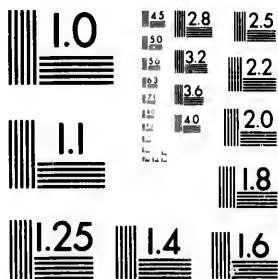


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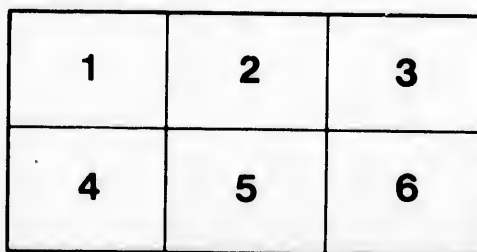
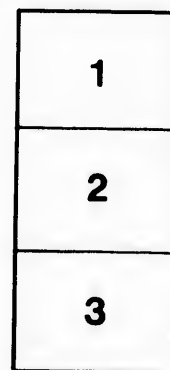
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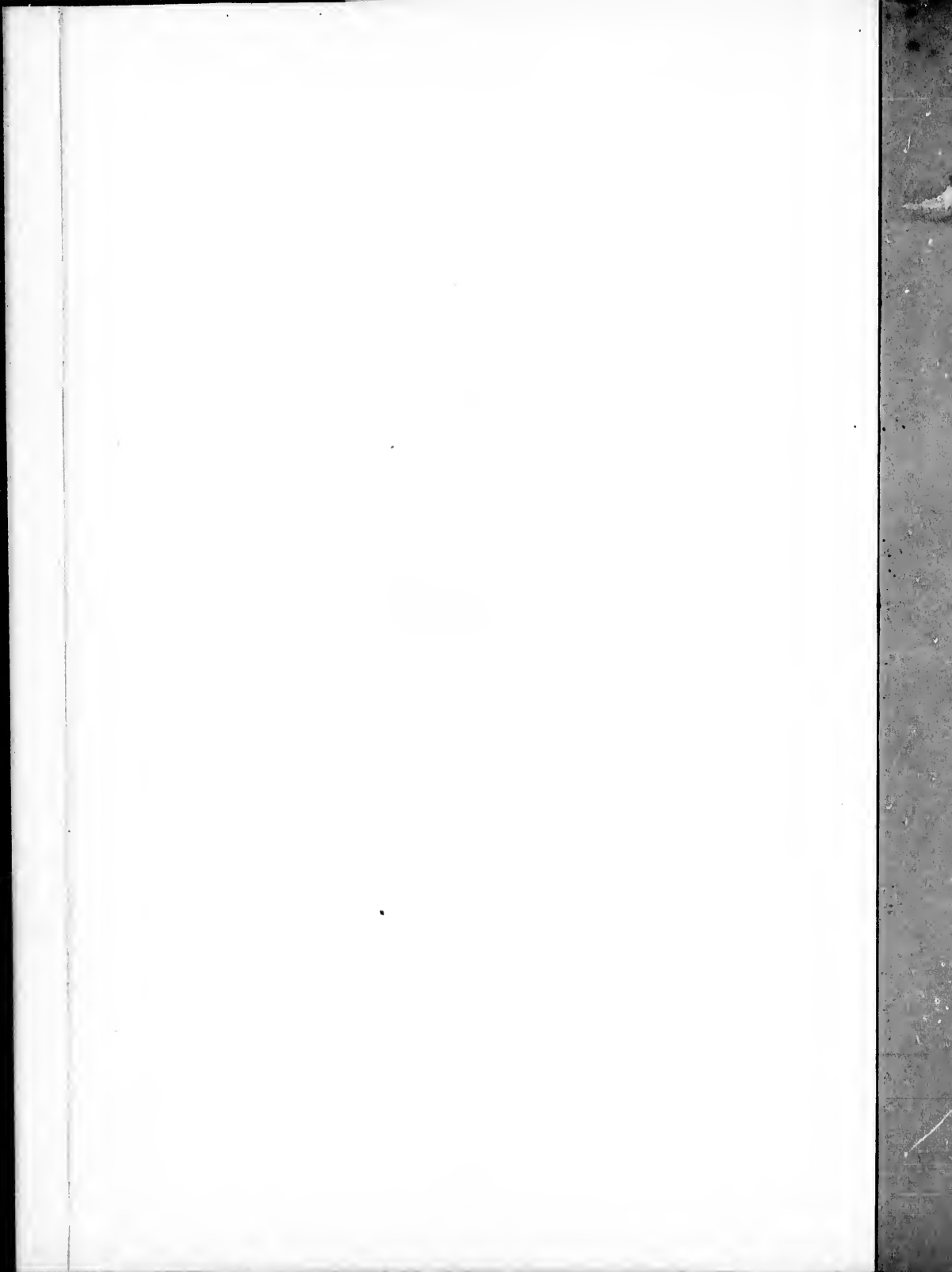
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The Railway in British Columbia.

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The Railway in British Columbia.

Letter from E. DEWDNEY, Esq., M. P., to the
Hon. A. MACKENZIE, Premier of Canada.

(Read at a Public Meeting, held in New Westminster, on the 10th of May, 1876, a report of which is annexed.)

Hon. A. Mackenzie,

SIR,—I take the liberty, before leaving for the upper country, of addressing you on a matter of great importance not only to the Province of British Columbia but to the Dominion at large, whose destinies, for the time, you control.

I feel that, in making an appeal to you for further surveys on the Fraser River Route, when in Committee of Supply, at so late a period of the session, I did not do that justice to the question which its importance demands.

I have closely watched your public utterances on the subject of the Canadian Pacific Railway ever since you occupied the important position you now hold, and as far as my knowledge goes, you have ever contended that not until the most exhaustive surveys had been made in British Columbia, would you declare a line for the railway in that Province.

Most properly, sir, have you declared that in British Columbia, the difficulties of discovering and determining a line—if not stupendous—were, at least, of a very grave character, and that the best engineering skill obtainable should be employed and placed at the disposal of the Engineer-in-Chief, with a view to obtaining the best, shortest, and cheapest line between the Rocky Mountains and the tide waters of the Pacific.

I think, sir, that you are also accredited with having said something to this effect—that if, after so much money had been expended in surveys, it were found that a better line of route was in existence, it would be a most unpardonable blunder; and I find in the speech you delivered at Sarnia, in the month of October last, the embodiment of the above crudely-announced views, in the following

words—of vast import when taken in connection with this subject:—

“I have always resisted any attempt made to force us to adopt a line until we had that line brought fairly under survey, and were able to define exactly the grades we could have, the distance to traverse, and its capacity as a commercial as well as a political road. To that determination we shall adhere, and not a mile will be let until our surveyors are able to point out and show by evidence what they are able to accomplish, AND THAT THEY HAVE CHOSEN THE BEST ROUTE.”

These I take to be the views of a thoroughly practical man, and one who is determined that neither prejudiced representations, political wire-pulling, nor interested landholders shall have any influence in deciding the matter.

But from a speech made by you during the late session of Parliament, on the Canadian Pacific Railway, I find you say “that the line from the summit of the Rocky Mountains to Fort George on the head of the Fraser is practically located.” If this is true, I am forced to the conclusion that the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway will be decided on in British Columbia without that thorough search, that complete survey, which in all your utterances you hold would be necessary to make a selection of the best route; and it must follow that you have abandoned all idea, of any further investigation of the Thompson and Fraser Route; and in this I contend that there is a great probability of your unwittingly committing a grave, and what may prove to be very expensive, if not a fatal, blunder.

But you do so wilfully, I would not for a moment assert, nor would

I, as many are doing, charge you with favoring a line away to the north of all settlement, with a view to punishing recalcitrant Columbians.

I am willing, and I do, give you credit for an anxious desire so to locate the line that its "capacity as a commercial as well as a political" road would be fully brought out.

Before proceeding to argue on the relative merits of this or the other route, I will simply endeavour to inform you of what I, in common with many others, know of the surveys made on the route in question, and after having given this your serious attention, you will quickly perceive whether, in the interest of the Dominion of Canada, it would be well to continue making a line westward from Fort George, without at the same time ordering further surveys to be conducted on the cañons of the Fraser River.

The anxiety of the Canadian Government to complete the survey of a country in which they had agreed to commence railway construction inside of two years, was so great that in one or two instances the work of preliminary survey was unavoidably placed in the hands of extremely incompetent men, and the consequence was that work of little or no utility was the result. Such was the case with that portion of the work about which I propose to write, namely, the cañons of the Fraser.

You are aware that a first class wagon road—a road unequalled, indeed, by any on the Continent of America—was made through the cañons in 1864.

It struck the gentleman who had immediate charge of the survey in that locality, that a great deal of hard climbing and rough work might be avoided by keeping the line of wagon road, and when I tell you that there are as many as three deflections in as many miles, varying from 100 to 500 feet each, you can easily imagine that a railway survey following these deflections, and taking the sinuosities of the road with them, could have been none other than one which the Engineer-in-Chief would quickly condemn; and when I add further that while the Transit man was following this line, his Levellers were quite as

busily engaged in running theirs at a distance varying from 100 to 500 feet below him, you will at once perceive how thoroughly worthless was the work performed in the cañons.

The plans and profiles were thrown aside when submitted to the Engineer as useless, and were afterwards destroyed by fire in the department buildings.

If, then, I except 16 miles directly above Yale (a careful survey of which was made by Mr. Cambie on one side of the river only). I am correct in saying that any information you may possess, must be other than that obtained by actual survey. I know farther that the 16 miles above alluded to, is recognized as by far the most difficult, and presents more engineering difficulties than any other portion of the much dreaded cañons of the Fraser.

I know also that the survey of the Fraser River below Yale was made in connection with the Coquella route, and is consequently on the opposite side from Yale and was run so as to necessitate the bridging of the Fraser at a very wide point, and one which would interfere with the navigation of the river. All this would be obviated by keeping the Yale side of the Fraser.

This is what I know of the circumstances connected with the survey of the Fraser, and it may be summed up as this: that, with the exception of the 16 miles hurriedly run by Mr. Cambie, no survey has been made of the line between Burrard's Inlet and Lytton.

I am aware that it may be urged that some portion of the line between Lytton and Kamloops will be very heavy, as it must pass along a number of apparently loose sand and gravelly hill sides. These, however, when our wagon road was being constructed, were found to be not so formidable as was expected, as the banks become much more solid as they are dug into, and only in a few exceptional cases will expensive retaining walls be necessary. As to the route from Kamloops northward, there is but one opinion, and that is that it is extremely favorable.

To return to the cañons of the Fraser, they have been open to travel

since 1864, and have been passed through, summer and winter, since that period, so that a fair estimate can reasonably be made of the character of snow and land slides, which might be supposed to take place in such a locality. It is quite safe to say that no trouble need be apprehended from this source.

The snowfall in these canons never exceeds three feet at a time, and such falls do not occur more than twice or thrice through the worst seasons. During the remainder of the winter the falls are but light, and from the nature of country, and the total absence of wind there are no drifts.

A snow plough could easily clear the track, as there would be but few deep cuts, the track for the most part running along side the river, into which the snow could easily be thrown.

These remarks as to fall of snow extend only to Boston Bar, a distance of 25 miles above Yale. For two seasons only, I remember heavy falls of snow between Boston Bar and Lytton. Above the latter point wheeling, and not sleighing, is the rule. As for land slides either in the canons or beyond, they never occur.

I leave it to you, therefore, whether you have or can possibly expect to have such evidence as this concerning any route you may finally select away in the distant north.

I am aware that your Engineers report unfavorably of the Fraser Route. I am also aware that Mr. Smith was caught in a snow storm in the canons in the latter part of November, 1874, and that he was compelled to take it on foot for 40 miles. I am free to confess that all this was the case and ask you not to be guided by a single circumstance of the kind, and would refer you to the schedule time table made in the conveyance of the mails through from Yale to Cariboo, covering a term of, say, 10 years. This will give you a much better idea of the terrors of the canons, than can the experience of a single trip in the winter season.

In addition I may add, that hundreds of tons of goods were in the early days of the Colony, carried on Indians' backs at all seasons of the year, and in canoes in early spring,

and I do not recollect that a single life or cargo has been lost through slides, whether of snow or land.

I am aware that it has been advanced as an argument against the full survey of these canons, that the Deputy Engineer-in-Chief has passed them often enough to be able to form correct conclusions as to the practicability of the route for railway purposes. But I respectfully submit whether such argument as that is of any value or not. If judgment can be passed on a piece of work which, it is acknowledged, presents the greatest engineering difficulties, by an Engineer travelling on one side of a valley and looking over at the other, why was not the whole country surveyed in the same economical manner? Why if the mere passing through the canons is sufficient to justify an opinion of the value of a route—is it that the country was put to the enormous expense of \$2,000,000 for Surveys?

So far from admitting that anything like a correct estimate can be made by the eye of the cost of construction through these canons, I contend that not only one but a number of the most careful surveys should be made, before the shortest route to the best harbour should be abandoned.

I cannot but take it for granted that you regard the Bute Inlet Route as practically abandoned, if for no other reason (and there are other and strong reasons) than that you estimate the cost of the line from the head of Bute Inlet to Esquimalt (the natural and only harbor of that route) at \$27,500,000.

However, for the purpose of argument, I will ask, Have you any testimony respecting the winter difficulties to be faced on the Bute Inlet, the Gardiner Channel, or the Dean Canal route? I fear you have not.

I have been told, with how much truth I cannot say, that even last year land-slides occurred on the Homathco, carrying thousands of tons of rock and earth, snapping great trees as if they were but pipe stems. How much more likely are these landslides to occur in a locality where immense glaciers exist, thousands of feet above where the line would be carried.

The canons of the Fraser, we know,

are free of glaciers and consequently of land slides, and the snow slides are, we know, of trifling consequence for every point at which they can occur is known, and could easily be guarded against in Railway construction.

I might enlarge on the disadvantages of the Bute Inlet route by again reminding you that to make Waddington harbour the present terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway is to compel either the Government of the Dominion or private parties to build 260 additional miles of railway in order to reach an available sea port and by that means burden the traffic for all time to come, with a tax sufficient to meet the interest and working expenses equal to one sixth of the whole cost of the line from the Pacific to Lake Superior.—A burden that no prudent man would for a moment contemplate whether competition with other lines were within the range of possibility or not.

Even if a system of land and water (the most inexpensive possible) be adopted, the burden on the traffic would not be lessened. But I cannot bring myself to believe that efforts will be made to avoid a harbor which you well know is free from all objections—is nearer the centre of traffic—nearer the coal beds—is open at all seasons—which is in a position to compete for the traffic of the East—is the end of the "*shortest route having the best gradients,*" simply because the first cost may exceed that of others.

In my endeavors to bring to your notice the claims of the Burrard Inlet and Fraser routes, I would disclaim any intention of arguing that the line should be made to run through such portion of the country as is already settled, because of such settlement. I hold that the interest of the Dominion as a whole should be looked to in a matter of this kind, and that it would not be at all fair for a small population such as ours to attempt to dictate route to a people who must for all time to come bear the consequence of any mistake that may be made in selecting a line.

You have not, however, overlooked the importance of building the Railway in the immediate vicinity of settlement where it is possible; for in your speech reported in Hansard

(page 505—in speaking of the more northerly Routes,) you say, "Any route so far north as this, is open to serious objections that it would reach the Pacific from 50 to 60 miles north of the northern extremity of Vancouver Island. It would be entirely beyond the present populated portion of the country which is further to the south; and it would be so situated that we could scarcely hope to compete for certain branches of the trans-continental trade which a more southerly line could secure." So that I feel sure you will not overlook items of this character in making your final selection.

In another part of the same speech you remark, that the Valley of the Fraser presents by far the most favorable route surveyed in respect of "shortness of distance and easy grades." Should not that circumstance alone induce you to order a more particular survey of that portion of the route which it is represented presents the greatest difficulties, viz., the canon of the Fraser?

I am of opinion that you would be remiss in your duty to the Dominion, if you permitted the final location to be made without *exhausting* (your own word) every possible means to learn the exact cost of a line through the cañons of the Fraser. I hold, without fear of successful contradiction, that the portion surveyed by Mr. Cambie is not a fair average of the work and that nothing short of the most exhaustive examination of that rocky pass, would justify you in finally locating the Railway elsewhere.

The question naturally arises, is it not much better that a few extra thousands should be spent, in obtaining a line which you acknowledge has the best gradients and which also leads to the best harbour in the Province, than that it should be placed at Denn's Canal or other northern point, the winter difficulties of which no man can possibly foretell and where you acknowledge you would not be in a position to compete with certain transcontinental trade?

May I, therefore, venture to hope that you will cause the survey asked for to be made this summer, simultaneously with that you propose

making in the direction of Dean's Canal? The cost of the work will be small as compared with that to be done in the interior, and I feel that
Victoria, B. C. May 6, 1876.

the Government will be amply repaid for the outlay.
I have the honor to remain,
Your obedient servant,
EDGAR DEWDNEY

R E P O R T

Of a Public Meeting held at New Westminster, B. C., May 10th, 1876

(Reprinted from the DOMINION PACIFIC HERALD.)

The meeting called for the purpose of expressing the thanks of the people of New Westminster to Mr. Dewdney for his able advocacy of the Fraser route, took place in the Hyack Hall on Wednesday evening.

His Worship Mayor McInnes occupied the Chair, and Mr J. S. Clute was chosen Secretary.

The Chairman read the requisition in obedience to which the meeting had been called. It was signed by over '00 residents. He was glad to see such a very large number present. It showed that they had not abandoned the hope that the railway would come down the Fraser Valley—a hope in which he heartily shared.

Mr. J. A. R. Homer said the resolution he was about to move was one of thanks to Edgar Dewdney, Esq., member for Yale Kootenay in the Commons of Canada. By his long residence in, and familiar knowledge of the country, and by his skill as an engineer, Mr Dewdney was enabled to form a very correct idea of the advantages of the various routes; and he had demonstrated that the Fraser was shorter and easier than any other. The speaker entered into particulars, showing that, if it was to compete with American lines; the Canadian Pacific must terminate at Burrard Inlet, Hudson Bay as an Eastern terminus would be a fair parallel for Dean's Canal as a Western terminus; and we could easily imagine how the people of the East would regard such a selection. Mr. Homer also spoke of the large extent of fertile country which would be opened by the line, if it came by the southern route, while no such advantage would be secured by any possible northern line. He believed that the able manner in which Mr. Dewdney, with the assistance of Mr. Cunningham, brought and kept this matter under the attention of the Government, would have the best results. He was thoroughly convinced that the Fraser route was the best, not only for a portion of the Province, but for the whole Province and the whole Dominion. Even Victoria herself, he believed, would

study her own best interests by advocating the Fraser route. He had much pleasure in moving:

That his worship the Mayor be requested to present to E. Dewdney, Esq., M. P. the thanks of the citizens of New Westminster for the ability, energy, and clearness with which he has brought the advantages possessed by the Fraser valley and Burrard Inlet, as the route and terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, under the notice of the Government, Parliament, and people of Canada.

Mr. James Cunningham, M. P., seconded the resolution, with grateful feelings towards Mr. Dewdney. While his association with that gentleman had been pleasant personally, he had ever found him a staunch friend of the Mainland and of the Province. They had often conferred together on questions pertaining to the welfare of this country, and they had worked in harmony. It was uphill work to advocate the Fraser route. They had the surveyors' reports against them, and also the statements made by the Premier in the House, which were based on these reports. The expense of this route was dwelt upon; and, especially in a time of such commercial depression as the present, the argument of expense was a very strong one. They also had the people of another part of this Province against them. All these things made it necessary for one who advocated the southern route to possess considerable moral courage. Yet when we think of the advantages which must accrue to the Dominion from the adoption of this route, it seems astonishing that the Government should need to be prompted as to the duty of thoroughly examining it. He hoped that the Government would survey the canons, and if they did be expected that the route would be adopted.

The Chairman then presented the thanks of the citizens to Mr. Dewdney in the following terms:

To Edgar Dewdney, Esq., M. P.

The citizens of New Westminster have requested me, by a resolution passed this day, to express to you their thanks for the able and energetic manner in which you have, during the past session of Parliament, advocated the merits of the Fraser River as the

Route, and Burrard Inlet as the Terminus, of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and especially for the broad and comprehensive manner in which you dealt with the subject, demonstrating that the selection of that route and terminus would be not alone for the benefit of this City and District, but for the general advantage of the Province as well as of the whole Dominion—a course that cannot but result in drawing the attention of the Government, Parliament, and people of Canada much more particularly to this route than if you had adopted a merely sectional view. I have therefore much pleasure in conveying to you their thanks, and trust that your exertions may have a successful termination.

T. R. McInnes, Mayor.

Mr. Dewdney, who was received with cheers, said he was very grateful for this demonstration, and for the kind address which had been presented to him. He was one of the first settlers in this city, and had passed here some of the pleasantest years of his life. He referred to several of the "pioneer" residents, whom he was very glad to see here to-night. He was also glad to see all, without reference to political dividing lines, uniting to give a hearty expression on the railway matter. In advocating the adoption of the Fraser route he had conscientiously endeavored to do his duty to the Province and the Dominion; he believed that route was the best for all. He did not object to the northern surveys; the more they surveyed, the sooner they would be convinced that we had the route, and the only one. (Cheers.) Mr. Dewdney then referred in complimentary terms to Mr. Cunningham, member for this District who had, he said, worked most cordially with him, and done his best for the interests of his district. Comparatively little interest had been taken in this matter of the railway route in British Columbia in former years; but now people were turning their attention to the matter, as they felt that a decision must shortly be arrived at; and now was the time to strike. The policy of the present Government differed from that of the Macdonald Administration on the railway question. Sir John Macdonald's party were in favor of pressing the work to completion as rapidly as possible, believing that, the sooner it was completed, the sooner would they receive a return for the outlay.

Mr. Mackenzie's party, on the other hand, favored delay, and desired to go cautiously to work. His Government was supported to a great extent by men who dreaded taxation and that, of course, influenced his policy. He (Mr. Dewdney) felt sure, however, that—once the surveys were completed—Mr. Mackenzie would be foremost to urge on the construction of the line. The day before he left Ottawa, he had been assured by Mr. Mackenzie that the canons of the Fraser would be surveyed thoroughly. It had been reported, the Premier said, that serious difficulties existed in the canons, but he must have evidence that these difficulties did really exist, before he allowed them to influence his decision. (Cheers.) He would not abandon the route till he was convinced that a better one existed. Reference had been made to a report that telegraphic construction had been ordered from Edmonton to Fort George; but he (Mr. Dewdney) felt sure that no telegraph work would be done on this side of Teke Jans Cache till the railway route was finally decided upon. In reading over the speech which he had delivered on the railway question in the House, he found he had omitted some points which might have been mentioned. He had therefore, addressed a letter to Mr. Mackenzie, setting the whole case before him. He had a copy of the letter, and would read it, if the meeting desired it. (Cheers.)

(Mr. Dewdney then read the letter, the full text of which will be found on the first and second pages of this issue. The reading was frequently interrupted by applause.)

He had taken care to state nothing but facts within his own knowledge. He again thanked them most cordially for their kind appreciation of his efforts.

Mr. J. C. Brown moved that the Mayor be instructed to have the address which he had presented to Mr. Dewdney, engrossed on parchment, and the seal of the Corporation attached.

Seconded by Mr. Edmonds and carried unanimously.

Mr. Dewdney moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was carried by acclamation, and the meeting (one of the largest and most enthusiastic we have seen here) adjourned.

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