

Ottawa Daily Times

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The Ottawa Times

City and County Official Paper. FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1867.

SPEECH OF P. FORTIN, Esq., M.P., ON THE INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY BILL.

Mr. SPEAKER—The subject now before the House is important to the Dominion; and it involves also one of the most difficult questions to solve with a due regard to the general interests involved. It is important because the building of the Intercolonial Railway will entail an expenditure of some twenty millions of dollars; and difficult because of the selection of a route the future utility of such an expenditure is in great measure dependent. The security of the route in a military point of view is closely interwoven with considerations affecting even our national existence. Difficulties of a minor character enter into this choice of a line. Local interests and private views, so few in sectional influence and so individual opinions, must necessarily be mixed up with the general question. That these should in some sense endeavor to influence the public opinion, is to be expected. But the whole question must be dealt with in a broader sense. It must be a measure of policy, of necessity, and defense for the whole Dominion. The country regards it as the crowning act of Union. Without it Confederation cannot be considered an accomplished fact. It is not only to form means of communication between the two parts of our country, but to unite the people, thus forming a complete whole of the two Provinces. This road will have another and still greater advantage—and this is the principal point of view in which it should be considered—this will, during the winter months, unite together the remotest parts of our country, and will be months of the year the only means of communication with the most northern parts of the Dominion.

The route chosen must above all be a strategic and military one, for the transport of troops for military operations. This being admitted, it is required to be safe from attack, and consequently as remote as possible from the frontier to avoid danger from its communication being interrupted, a delay of only a few days being of the utmost importance. The subject of an intercolonial railway has already attracted the attention of the various Provinces, and many attempts were made to secure its construction, but without practical result, until the Imperial Government constructed the railway from Woodstock to the country through which the road should pass. That distinguished officer after an elaborate survey which lasted three years, reported that only one line was possible, and it is now known as Major Robinson's line.

In 1864 the Canadian Government employed Mr. Fleming to make a survey of the route which he called the Central Line and the Southern or Frontier line, making altogether three routes proposed, for the railway.

The Frontier line starting from River du Loup passes by Temiscouata Lake until it reaches the St. John River at a place called Little Falls; thence following the banks of the St. John River to Woodstock, where it touches the railway from Woodstock to Andrews. Although this appears to be the shortest route to the sea by way of St. Andrews, it is inadmissible as a strategic and military route, for the reason of its crossing the United States frontier for more than one half of its length.

The second line starting from River du Loup crosses the Missisquoi River, touches the Frontier line, and crosses the St. Lawrence and thence to the St. John and Shediac Railway at Apogah Station. In a space of 120 miles this line runs within 20 miles of the United States frontier, while it crosses the eastern nearly 200 miles of country comprised in the Provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec. It does not in my opinion deserve the name of Central, which is given to it, and would besides be subject to the same objections on account of its proximity to the frontier. In the settled part of the country it would be exposed to attacks, and the blowing up of some of the large bridges in the winter season would render the route useless. Besides the scarcity of timber will be a great objection to the building of the requisite bridges. One of these will require to be at least 1800 feet long, and in what are the laborers to be found to do this work? Not along that part of the line, as the country is a wilderness and unfit for settlement, it is evident that in case war with our neighbors this line could not be relied upon, and would be a mere waste of money.

Let us see, however, if this line would give a route free at times from obstacles. I need not go over a new description of the country which is traversed by chains of mountains reaching a height of 2000 feet, forming numerous and enormous slopes and steep descents, the valleys would fill up and render communication impossible. And how many men and how many days would it take to clear away these accumulations of snow? I need not say that the route is not to be recommended, being stopped with troops on board. To what purpose will they not be exposed in a wholly unsettled country. This line has therefore nothing to commend it as a strategic and military route.

I have now to examine Major Robinson's line. Starting from River du Loup, it crosses the Trus Pictou, thence to Neigette, and follows on the Matapedia valley to Redington, and after running along the river strike New Brunswick at a distance of about 187 miles from River du Loup. Following the river and bank of the Restigouche river for 12 miles, it touches Dalhousie and crosses the Nipisiguit river. From thence running in a south-westerly direction it crosses Miramichi river, thence into Nova Scotia, joining the Halifax Railway to Truro. Let us examine if this line answers the purposes of a military and strategic route. At River du Loup it is 30 miles distant from the United States frontier, at Three Pictoues 45 miles, at Matapedia 72 miles, and in New Brunswick the shortest point is Indianapolis, which is 97 miles distant from the frontier. Major Robinson's route therefore answers admirably the requirements of a military route, for reason of its distance from the United States frontier, and protection as it is from attack by the difficulty of approaching it through a mountainous and thickly wooded country.

Will this route, however, answer the other requirements of a military route, and be open during the whole year, and above all during winter? I unhesitatingly say yes, and the more so since I have travelled over the greater part of this route. This line will pass through a comparatively level country, and where observation has shown that snow storms are of less frequent occurrence, and even should these occur laborers would be found at hand to remove the obstructions.

The best to understand the difficulties of building both lines I will read from Mr. Fleming's report, and Major Robinson's reports, to show that while Major Robinson's route is very easy to build, it is almost impossible to overcome the disadvantages of the Central route.

Extract from Mr. Fleming's report, showing the grades and slopes of No. 6 Central line:

Table with columns: Level, Under 20 feet, From 20 to 30 feet, From 30 to 40 feet, From 40 to 50 feet, From 50 to 60 feet, From 60 to 70 feet, From 70 to 80 feet, From 80 to 90 feet, From 90 to 100 feet, From 100 to 110 feet, From 110 to 120 feet, From 120 to 130 feet, From 130 to 140 feet, From 140 to 150 feet, From 150 to 160 feet, From 160 to 170 feet, From 170 to 180 feet, From 180 to 190 feet, From 190 to 200 feet, From 200 to 210 feet, From 210 to 220 feet, From 220 to 230 feet, From 230 to 240 feet, From 240 to 250 feet, From 250 to 260 feet, From 260 to 270 feet, From 270 to 280 feet, From 280 to 290 feet, From 290 to 300 feet, From 300 to 310 feet, From 310 to 320 feet, From 320 to 330 feet, From 330 to 340 feet, From 340 to 350 feet, From 350 to 360 feet, From 360 to 370 feet, From 370 to 380 feet, From 380 to 390 feet, From 390 to 400 feet, From 400 to 410 feet, From 410 to 420 feet, From 420 to 430 feet, From 430 to 440 feet, From 440 to 450 feet, From 450 to 460 feet, From 460 to 470 feet, From 470 to 480 feet, From 480 to 490 feet, From 490 to 500 feet, From 500 to 510 feet, From 510 to 520 feet, From 520 to 530 feet, From 530 to 540 feet, From 540 to 550 feet, From 550 to 560 feet, From 560 to 570 feet, From 570 to 580 feet, From 580 to 590 feet, From 590 to 600 feet, From 600 to 610 feet, From 610 to 620 feet, From 620 to 630 feet, From 630 to 640 feet, From 640 to 650 feet, From 650 to 660 feet, From 660 to 670 feet, From 670 to 680 feet, From 680 to 690 feet, From 690 to 700 feet, From 700 to 710 feet, From 710 to 720 feet, From 720 to 730 feet, From 730 to 740 feet, From 740 to 750 feet, From 750 to 760 feet, From 760 to 770 feet, From 770 to 780 feet, From 780 to 790 feet, From 790 to 800 feet, From 800 to 810 feet, From 810 to 820 feet, From 820 to 830 feet, From 830 to 840 feet, From 840 to 850 feet, From 850 to 860 feet, From 860 to 870 feet, From 870 to 880 feet, From 880 to 890 feet, From 890 to 900 feet, From 900 to 910 feet, From 910 to 920 feet, From 920 to 930 feet, From 930 to 940 feet, From 940 to 950 feet, From 950 to 960 feet, From 960 to 970 feet, From 970 to 980 feet, From 980 to 990 feet, From 990 to 1000 feet.

Extract from Major Robinson's report, showing the grades and slopes of his survey from Quebec to Halifax, according to Capt. Henderson, Royal Engineers:

Table with columns: Grade, Length, Total. Rows include: Colliery, 2,322,250; Haddock, 419,000; Ling, 35,230; Mackerel, 679,000; Herring, 2,177,500; Salmon, 2,250; Halibut, 2,250; Trout, 106,318; Cod tongues and sounds, 4,000; Sels, 1,600. Total: 4,769,218.

These statements will show at a glance the superiority of the Robinson route over the Central. For the first 365 miles of the route under 70, only 4 miles of 60 to 70, and 19 miles from 50 to 60, whilst Mr. Fleming's survey crosses on a length of 360, 10 miles, 21, 60 miles, 7, 60 miles, 4, 60 miles, 60 to 70 feet, and 39, 40 miles of 30 to 60.

However important are the above considerations, it must not be lost sight of that reported that only one line was possible, and it is now known as Major Robinson's line.

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COUNTY OF BONAVILLE

The fishermen of this county have in 1866 caught the following quantities of fish:

Table with columns: Fish, Quantity. Rows include: Colliery, 2,322,250; Haddock, 419,000; Ling, 35,230; Mackerel, 679,000; Herring, 2,177,500; Salmon, 2,250; Halibut, 2,250; Trout, 106,318; Cod tongues and sounds, 4,000; Sels, 1,600. Total: 4,769,218.

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