

THE GLEANER:

AND NORTHUMBERLAND, KENT, GLOUCESTER AND RESTIGOUCHE
COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL.

OLD SERIES]

Nec aranearum sone textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libumus ut apes.

[COMPRISED 13 VOLUMES

New Series, Vol. VIII.

Miramichi, Monday Evening, August 26, 1850.

No. 44.

The Portland Convention.

From the Portland Advertiser.

EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN RAILWAY.

Mr Johnston said, he wished it understood that in proposing this amendment, he intended nothing antagonistic to the great object which the Convention had in view, but was anxious to consider the best mode by which the great work could be accomplished. He contended that the most cheap and expeditious route would be obtained by crossing the Bay of Fundy from St. John, and thence by the valley of the Annapolis and Windsor, to Halifax. He ridiculed the idea of the Bay of Fundy being dangerous—it had been navigated for 20 years by steamers of an inferior class, yet none of them had been lost, nor had there been any loss of life. The New Brunswick people had been frightened at the waters of the Bay, and how appeared to have a sort of hydrophobia respecting it. Mr Johnston's principal argument was, that the difference of expense rendered the Digby route the most desirable; and as means would never be raised for the long route around the Bay, that line might be looked upon as impracticable. He wished a careful survey made by disinterested persons, and his constituents would cheerfully abide the result, even if the decision were adverse to their interests.

The Hon. L. A. Wilmot, in reply to Mr Johnston, admitted that he was one of those afflicted with *Fundy-phobia!* He feared if that route were selected, a new description of navigators must be found, who would navigate the steamers by their noses, smelling their way through the fogs! Mr Wilmot related some very amusing anecdotes of steam navigation in the Bay, in foggy weather, which told very strongly against the advocates of the Bay route; and he said, that while the Nova Scotia delegates were divided in opinion as to the Digby route, those from New Brunswick were unanimous in favor of the land route; he believed it would be found best, in constructing this Railway, to have it on the land. In regard to the amendment, he said he should feel inclined to move a WILMOT PROVISION to it, as follows: *Provided always, nevertheless, that no part of the said Railway shall be laid on the water!*

J. D. Fraser, Esq., M. P. P., delegate from Windsor, seconded the amendment, and spoke strongly in favor of the Digby route, contending that the fog was only a bugbear, which any boat properly equipped could readily overcome. He attempted to shew, that the difference in cost between the two routes proposed would be a million of pounds in favor of the Digby route; he was willing to submit the matter to the proposed Committee and cheerfully abide the result.

The Hon. E. B. Chandler opposed Mr Johnston's amendment, and said, it would be observed, that all admitted how desirable it was to have a continuous land route from Bangor to Halifax, and the only object urged was the expense. The great object of this railway was to secure to itself the whole travel between the Old World and the New; and failing to secure that, from any doubt as to certainty or speed, the attempt would be a failure. The hearts of the people of New Brunswick were with this continuous land route; and he did not believe the travelling community of the United States would consent to cross the Bay of Fundy either during the fogs of summer, or the ice and snow-storms of Winter. He considered it perfect madness to advocate this route; and it the amendment should be carried, the New Brunswick delegation could hold forth no prospects of success for this Railway; they could pledge no aid to it; and he believed it would create a feeling of dislike in that Province which might go far toward crushing

the whole undertaking. Mr Chandler then proceeded to answer the objections raised to the land route, on the score of expense. In Maine, there was the same extent of Railway to be built, by either route. In Nova Scotia, there was not so much railway to be built by the land route as by the Digby route; the difficulty then was in the Province of New Brunswick. Mr Johnston had said, that New Brunswick would not do its part; but the delegates from that Province said, *it would do its part*, and they ought to be the best judges. Mr Chandler contended that the difference in expense between the two routes would be very little when the constructing and maintaining four large steamboats, with the necessary piers, wharves, landings, and docks, on both sides of the Bay, was taken into account. The gentlemen who were sent there to oppose the continuous land route, represented only narrow portions of Nova Scotia, and certain local interests; a majority of the Nova Scotia delegates were opposed to this sectional feeling, and advocated the continuous land route, on broad and liberal principles. Mr Chandler concluded a very able speech, by saying he hoped the amendment would be withdrawn, as it would only tend to postpone the work indefinitely, and thus lead to difficulties which might be fatal to the whole enterprise.

Dr. Robert Bayard, of St. John, stated that he appeared as a delegate from his native Province of Nova Scotia, and he advocated the route across the Bay of Fundy. He deprecated all sectional feeling; and whatever route might be eventually selected, he would wish it a hearty God speed! As to the matter under discussion, it resolved itself into a question of pounds, shillings and pence—it was easier to speak millions than to collect millions. He acknowledged the superiority of the land route; but where would the cash come from to build it? If they could get the money he would go for the land route, with all his heart. He supported Mr Johnston's amendment, and did not believe it would retard the movement, he wished the routes to be examined by a committee of disinterested gentlemen from the United States; and he was authorized to announce, that his constituents would not oppose or obstruct the route on which that Committee should finally decide.

Mr John A. Poor, of Portland, here announced, that delegates from Quebec were present, who were obliged to depart that afternoon, and he therefore asked leave for them to address the Convention at once.

J. Bell Forsyth, Esq., of Quebec, after thanking the people of Portland for their liberality and hospitality on the present occasion, said he hoped, that although strangers now, they would not long remain so. Before two years should elapse, he expected that the Railway between Quebec and Portland would be completed, and then by the great network of Railways in the United States, they would soon be connected with all America. An idea had been thrown out, that the Canadians were dead to public works, which was not correct; in the aid which Canada had granted to public improvements, she had set an example to the Lower Provinces, which they would do well to follow. Mr Forsyth proceeded to say, that himself and his colleague, Mr Angers, appeared there as representing the Quebec and Melbourne Railroad; and he stated the resources and means upon which they relied for building that Railway.—Among these Mr Forsyth especially mentioned, that by the law of Canada, the proprietors of every Railroad in that province which exceeds 70 miles in length, are entitled, as a matter of right, to call upon the Province to contribute one-half of the expense of building such railway. This very proper and judicious arrangement, Mr Forsyth said, might well be adopted in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, as it would be found extremely

beneficial. In concluding a very sensible and business like speech, Mr Forsyth said that, viewing all he heard and saw around him, he would truly say,—“the night is past, joy cometh on the morrow!”

F. R. Angers, Esq., of Quebec, a member of the Canadian bar, apologized for his inability to address the Convention in a language of which he was not thoroughly master; but his remarks were very forcible and of much importance. He strongly advocated the proposed Railway as a great national thoroughfare, in which all Canada, from Quebec to Lake Huron, was deeply interested. He said that Quebec and Montreal would shortly be brought into Railway communication with the Atlantic, at Portland, by lines from those cities, which met together and fell into one at Sherbrooke and Melbourne. Mr Angers announced, that as to the proposed railway line from Portland to Halifax, the Canadian people felt a deep and growing interest in it, and would give it their cordial and hearty support.

Mr R. B. Dickey, of Nova Scotia, here called upon Mr Forsyth to express his opinions as to the comparative merits of the two proposed routes. Mr Forsyth in reply, expressed himself in favor of the continuous land route, and thought the feeling in Canada would be decidedly for the Railway by land. In order to render the line a paying one, it must be by the continuous route.

J. H. Gray, Esq., of St. John, next addressed the Convention, in a very able and eloquent speech. He complimented the American people for their great exertions to progress of the arts, sciences, and civilisation, and alluded, in very felicitous terms, to the Railway then under discussion. He reminded the Convention that the capitalists of London and New York had to pass their opinion upon the decision which might be there given; and in order to obtain the full confidence of those capitalists, the undertaking must be presented as one great continuous national work. If the practicability of the work were once established, the money would soon be forthcoming for its completion. The physical character of the country along the land route was exceedingly favorable for a line of railway, as had already been ascertained; he did not wish to malign the waters of the Bay of Fundy, which washed the shores of his own home, but it would not be denied that they had a character abroad which would seal the final doom of the Railway, if they were associated with it. Mr Gray then proceeded to view the line through New Brunswick, with regard to its profits as a local undertaking, and begged to inform his Nova Scotia friends, that if they did not choose to join in constructing the continuous line, the New Brunswickers would build it themselves. This was not the voice alone of the 28 delegates from New Brunswick, who were unanimous on that subject, but the voice of the 200,000 thousand people of that Province, whom they represented. Mr Gray then presented and carefully explained a variety of statistics in relation to the proposed Railway from St. John to the Nova Scotia line, by Shediac, and proved very satisfactorily, by the tables of existing traffic, carefully taken by trustworthy persons, at three different stations on this line, that a railway would pay five per cent. interest on an expenditure of £7500 per mile, after deducting forty per cent. for working expenses, and leave a clear surplus of £10,000 per annum. In order, however, to obtain the money for this railway it should be put forth as a great national undertaking, and not as a local one—thus characterised, it would command the confidence of capitalists on both sides the Atlantic, and money would soon be forthcoming to build it. Great Britain was greatly interested in this undertaking: with that nation it would not be a question of money—two millions of pounds had been expended on the Britania

tubular bridge over the Menai Strait, to save a troublesome ferry and gain twelve additional miles of land travel: and England would not be disposed to consider a million more or less, where a great pathway of nations on dry land, was concerned.

R. B. Dickey, Esq., of Nova Scotia, succeeded Mr Gray, and depreciated the idea, if any such were entertained, that the delegates from Nova Scotia, were unanimous as to Mr Johnston's amendment in favor of the Digby route—a majority of Nova Scotia Delegates were wholly opposed to crossing the Bay of Fundy, and their differences with their colleagues on that point were irreconcilable.—Mr Dickey presented a large amount of statistical information, showing the travel which the land route would command, and he pointed out its general advantages, and superiority over the other route, in a very clear and convincing manner.

The Hon. John E. Fairbanks, of Halifax, spoke in favor of the land route, differing altogether from Mr Johnston, as to the Bay of Fundy; with respect to means for the continuous line, Mr Fairbanks said, he thought the friends of this undertaking, in England, would have little difficulty in raising the means for the uninterrupted line by land, on the London Stock Exchange.

Joseph N. B. Kerr, Esq., of Wallace, thought there was no occasion for such a Committee as contemplated by Mr Johnston. No doubt, it was possible to cross the Bay of Fundy, but all admitted that the land route was the best, simply confining themselves to denying that means could be found to build it. He had no doubt about it; and as one of the Nova delegates, he gave his hearty support to the Railway by land.

Mr Pryor, Mayor of Halifax, advocated the continuous route by land, and incidentally adverted to the City of Halifax, which he said contained about 25,000 inhabitants; the assessed value of real estates was £1,632,250, and of personal estate £1,944,687.

Mr Johnston's amendment was then put and negatived, four of the Nova Scotia delegates only voting in its favor, as also Mr Neal of Portland, who courteously joined this very small minority. The fifth resolution in favor of the continuous land route, was then put, and no opposition appearing, it was declared to have passed unanimously, amid much applause.

The arrival of General H. A. S. Dearborn, Mayor of Roxbury, was announced; the General appeared upon the platform; and after a few words of welcome, the Convention adjourned until the next morning at 9 o'clock.

THIRD DAY.—The Convention assembled punctually at nine, and the floor was soon afterwards taken by General Dearborn, who was received with much applause, and at once commenced his address. He said—

Gentlemen of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, or from whatever British Province you may have come, and from whatsoever country beyond our borders, and citizens of the United States, I feel deeply the compliment which you have paid to me, in adjourning this Convention for the purpose of hearing my remarks; but I fear that you will all be disappointed in your expectations—I feel utterly unable to occupy so large a space as is opened by the resolutions before us—a resolution to establish a highway between two continents, to do it well, to do it speedily. I feel satisfied that it can be done, I feel satisfied that it will be done, and that, old as I am, I may yet pass over it—that if the Lord spares my life for five years, I may go to St. John, to Halifax, to Ireland, to London, and, crossing from Dover to Calais, I may go from thence to the furthest extremity of Europe. Nor shall the highway of Nations stop there, for I believe that some Stephenson may yet arise to throw an iron arch across the Strait between Europe and Asia, and that a visit to the Euphrates may be to the traveller but an ordinary excursion.