

Extract from the Journals of the House of Assembly, Saturday, 17th March, 1849.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON RAILWAYS.

The Honorable Mr. L. A. Wilmot, from the Committee appointed on the ninth day of March instant, and to whom were referred all matters connected with Railways, submitted a Report; and he having read the same, handed it in at the Clerk's Table, where it was again read, and is as follows:—

“ The Select Committee to whom were referred all matters relating to Railways in this Province, beg leave to submit the following Report:—

“ In the consideration which we have given to the highly important subject referred to us, we have been deeply impressed with the force of His Excellency's remarks in relation to Railways in the Speech at the opening of the present Session, that ‘ The elements of great future prosperity in the North American Colonies, depend for their immediate development on Public Works of this description, and that no sacrifice which tends to secure their execution, will ultimately be found too great.’

“ Viewing the relative position of the North American Colonies, and the great importance in a national point of view of improving the facilities for mutual intercourse, we consider it a matter of the greatest moment for the permanency of British interests on this Continent, that a Railway should be laid down to connect the Lower Provinces with the interior of Canada.

“ It was under the influence of this conviction, that we cheerfully united with the Legislatures of the adjoining Provinces in 1846, in making provision for a Survey between Halifax and Quebec.

“ That service has been ably performed, and the practicability of a great Trunk Line satisfactorily shewn by the valuable Report of Major Robinson.

“ This Report we have had before us, but from the estimated expense of the Line, we deem it altogether impossible for these Colonies to undertake it, unless largely aided by the Imperial Government.

“ The Commercial depression at present pervading these Provinces, brought about as it has been in a great degree by the recent modifications of the British Tariff, leaves us in an enfeebled condition, and wholly unable to undertake that portion of the great Trunk Line which runs through this Province.

“ We believe that no other measure can be devised, which will so certainly consolidate the Colonies, and perpetuate our connexion with Great Britain; while, without it, we fear that our position as Colonies will be of short duration.

“ Entertaining these opinions, it might be expected that we should at once suggest some means for the construction of the Trunk Line; but if we were able to execute our portion, it would be comparatively useless, without the completion of those parts running through the adjoining Provinces. Co-operation therefore on this work is indispensable, and as we believe the financial condition of the Sister Colonies is no better than our own, so do we feel satisfied that they cannot undertake their portions, without Imperial aid.

“ It appears by the observations of the Commissioners of Railways, contained in the communication from Captain Harness to H. Merivale, Esquire, that ‘ after giving this question the fullest consideration, so far as they possess the means to do so, the Commissioners are disposed to think, that, although in a Military and Political point of view, the completion of a Railway between Halifax and Quebec may be of great importance, yet as a Commercial undertaking, it is very doubtful whether it can, at least for a long time to come, prove profitable.’

“ We will not now go into the calculations which bear upon the Commercial view of the question, but admitting the correctness of the Commissioners' opinions, we shall deeply regret if the Imperial Government and the British Parliament are influenced in their deliberations on this all important question by the adjustment of Commercial profits.

“ How would this mode of calculation apply to the Military and Naval Forces of Great Britain? It would certainly be a difficult thing so to direct a financial investigation on this subject, as to produce a profitable result in a Commercial point of view, and yet, the maintenance of these forces is considered indispensable to the preservation of the national honor and integrity.

“ In this light do we humbly conceive the Great British North American Trunk Railway should be viewed, and it is therefore to be deplored, that an official paper emanating from the Office of Commissioners of Railways at Whitehall, should deal with this question as wholly Commercial, and should therefore give to the Foreign Ports of New York, Boston and Portland, a preference to the Harbour of Halifax.

“ We think that the plain broad question on this subject is—*Do the People of England wish to retain the North American Colonies or not?* If they do, the Trunk Railway is indispensable, and should be completed at any cost; if on the other hand there be a prevailing disposition at Home to throw us off, it will be far better to do so at once, and not leave us as