

County Council

February 1st

Council opened a few minutes after 2 p.m., pursuant to adjournment. The Clerk read the portion of the minutes of last meeting authorizing adjourned meeting. Also called the roll, all the councilors being present and answering to their names.

The Warden called upon each Councilor in succession to state what had been done in the way of testing the wishes of the people. Councilor Ferguson of Sec. No. 1, stated that on account of the impossibility of seeing the Pictou Island people at this season of the year, and having been able to personally consult the greater number of the ratepayers in Fisher's Grant, he had called no meeting, but felt assured that the majority were in favor of granting it. Councilor Donald Fraser, Sec. No. 2, had held no meeting, but would vote for the right of way, and knew it would be approved of by the greater number of the people. Councilors John Sutherland, Sec. 3 and Dr. Collie, Sec. 4, spoke to the same effect. Councilors A.J. McKay, Sec. 5, John Rod. McDonald, Sec. 6, and David Ferguson, Sec. 7, had all held meetings which had unanimously agreed to instruct them to vote for the right of way and that he would, therefore, have to record his vote against it. Councilors Angus Davies, Sec. 9, stated that many of the people in his section were in favor of it, but that considerable opposition was manifested at the meeting called. Nevertheless, as he had never given any pledge he would exercise his own discretion and vote for it.

Councilors Robert Maxwell Sec. 10 and J.R. McDonald Sec. 11 had held two meetings (the former two) which had declared in favor of the right away. Councilor Jeff McColl of Sec. 12 had been authorized by his constituents at a meeting to do as he pleased and would vote for it. Councilor McMillan who at the late meeting of Council was in favor of granting the right of way and would probably have supported a resolution to that effect stated that at the meetings called by him the opposition to the measure was so determined and unanimous that he would have to vote against it. The Warden's Section had passed a resolution to grant the right of way and let the County hear only 40 per cent of the damages. Councilors McPherson Sec. 15 and McDonald Sec. 16 had not called meetings but believed the feelings of their sections was in favor of paying the damages if it was not possible to get rid of them without periling the success of the Railway scheme. In Sec. 17 two meetings had been held, at Stellarton and Hopewell, the former declaring for and the latter against the right of way. Councilor Cameron of Sec. 18 said that although he had not held a meeting he knew that his people felt they owed a debt of honor to West Pictou in the matter of railway damages and would do as they did. Councilor Smith Sec. 19 had held a meeting largely attended which decided to grant the right of way if a refusal would endanger the ultimate success of the scheme.

Councilor Dewar, Sec. 20, had held three meetings, two of which had decided for one and one against the measure. He said that there were many objections raised, and only the feeling that they owed goodwill and aid to West Pictou led them to act as they did.

Councilor Fraser's (Sec. 21) people were willing to grant a right of way, but wanted some limit, or some terms fixed if it could be done, Councilor Rod. McDougall, Sec. 22 said the meeting in his section was small, but almost all were opposed, as the Section was very remote, and derived but little benefit from railways. He was left free, would vote for the measure if there was some check as to amount, but against it if no conditions were imposed. Coun. John McDougald, M.P. Sec.23, had called no meeting, but felt assured that the ratepayers would approve of his conduct in voting for the measure. Coun. D.J. Meikle, Sec. 24, had held three meetings, and found more in its favor than he had expected, but they were not willing to grant it without conditions.

The Warden remarked that under the Act it was impossible to embody in the resolution anything that would limit the company to a certain route or to a fixed amount of damages, and he spoke of the advisability of appointing a committee to guard the interests of the County, with power to apply to the proper authorities, what is the Governor General in Council through the Minister of Railways, should the company take a route on which the damages would be excessive.

Coun. McColl (Chairman of the Railway Committee) read a copy of the letter which he sent to the Attorney General, asking the meaning of certain sections of the Act, to which the Attorney General did not reply. Coun. McColl was informed that the Attorney General came to New Glasgow that morning to see him, and that he had said he would not give his opinion as Attorney General lest it might embarrass the Government if the question should hereafter come before them.

The committee at this sate, retired to prepare a report, and returned in a short time, Coun. McColl, Chairman, making a verbal report and moving the following resolution which was almost unanimously recommended by the committee:

Whereas the Great American & European Short Line Railway Company is desirous of immediately proceeding with the construction of a railway from Oxford to New Glasgow, and by the Act of the Assembly of Nova Scotia incorporating said company the consent of this Council is required to enable the company to acquire the right of way for said railway through this county.

And whereas this Council feels assured that the lands for the purpose of said railway will be so taken as not to incur any undue and excessive amount of damages therefore.

And whereas the building and operation of said railway will be of great value to that portion of the country through which it passes, and will directly or indirectly benefit the whole county and it is expedient that this council should forward the construction thereof in every way within its power;

Therefore resolved that this Council for the purposes of section thirty of chapter twenty-three of the Statutes of Nova Scotia for 1882 hereby authorize the said G.A. & E.S.L.R. Co. to take and acquire in the county such lands as are provided for said railway from Oxford to a point at or near New Glasgow under the provisions of section twenty-six of said chapter twenty-three of the Statutes of Nova Scotia for 1882, being the Act incorporating said company, this resolution being the resolution referred to in section 30 of said chapter 23 of said statutes.

The resolution was seconded by Coun. Collie.

Coun. John McDougald, M.P., said that a free right of way was one of the inducements held out to this company. That bonuses were granted to the other railways in the Province as well as a free right of way, and that from the damages in this case would be excessive. That no expenditure of the public money was of more benefit than in railways. Coun. McColl said that formerly on the basis of settlement between the town and county the towns were charged with county rates on one third of their assessment, owing to the practice in the country of assessing property at one third of its real value and therefore that the rates will require to be charge on the full value of the property.

Coun. Robert Dewar remarked that although it would be well to get the right of way cheaply, the interests of farmers through whose land the railway will run should be protected, a 100 feet wide means a great deal out of a small farm and the owners should get full value for their land. Coun. J.D. Fraser concurred with Coun. Dewar in his opinions.

After some further discussion the vote was taken and stood as follows:

For Couns. McColl, Cameron, Smith, Dr. Collie, J. Rod McDonald (6), John McDonald, John R. McDonald (11), Donald Fraser, John McDougald, David Ferguson, McPherson, Maxwell, A.J. McKay, Davies, Thos. McDonald, Sutherland, John Ferguson, John D. Fraser, and Dewar 19.

Against, Couns. J.C. McKay, H.S. Fraser, M. McMillan, Rod McDougald, and Meikle (5).

It was then upon motion of Coun. Collie, seconded by Coun. J.R. McDonald resolved that a committee be appointed to watch the interests of the county in the matter of the Great A. & E. Short Line Railway Coy.

Resolved that the Warden, Donald Fraser, and Wm. Smith be such committee.

Council adjourned.