

have no doubt of their ability to manage their own internal and domestic affairs practically without our supervision, although some senators say that is not the fact — if we yield that to them, we have not violated any principle of free government and of a free people; and all of this repeated newspaper clamor that we are about to do something extremely bad if we deny to those people full citizenship, it seems to me, is without any foundation whatever.

Mr. President, I had intended, as I said before, to go into very many phases of this case, and to touch upon even our relations with our Asiatic possessions; but I shall not do so now. I shall content myself with saying practically now what I have said — that this bill seems to me to be incongruous and unsatisfactory from any standpoint; I do not care whether it be from that of making Puerto Rico a part of the United States or making it a colony.

## JAMES PROCTOR KNOTT



JAMES PROCTOR KNOTT, LL.D., American Democratic congressman and lawyer, was born at Lebanon, Ky., Aug. 29, 1830. He early began to study law and removing in 1850 to Memphis, Mo., was licensed to practice there in the following year. In 1858, he entered the State legislature and was made chairman of the judiciary committee. He became attorney-general of the State soon after, but refusing to take the test oath in 1861, regarding it as too stringent in its character, his office was declared vacant and he was disbarred. In 1862, he returned to his birthplace in Kentucky, where he practiced his profession till his election to Congress in 1866. After some adverse discussion, he was permitted to take his seat in the House, where his first speech was directed against the constitutionality of the test oath and its application to members of Congress. He was reelected in 1868 and served on various committees, making on one occasion a humorous speech against a bill for the improvement of Pennsylvania Avenue, which defeated the bill amid much laughter. In the same Congress, his famous "Duluth" speech gave him a national reputation as a humorist. Knott was again a member of Congress, 1875-83, and was Governor of Kentucky from 1883 to 1887. Since 1894, he has been professor of law and dean of the law faculty in Centre College, Ky.

### SPEECH ON "DULUTH"

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 21, 1871

**M**R. SPEAKER,—If I could be actuated by any conceivable inducement to betray the sacred trust reposed in me by those to whose generous confidence I am indebted for the honor of a seat on this floor; if I could be influenced by any possible consideration to become instrumental in giving away, in violation of their known wishes, any portion of their interest in the public domain, for the mere promotion of any railroad enterprise whatever, I should certainly feel a strong inclination to give this measure my most earnest and hearty support; for I am assured that its success would materially enhance the pecuniary prosperity of some of the most valued friends I have on earth; friends

for whose accommodation I would be willing to make almost any sacrifice not involving my personal honor or my fidelity as the trustee of an express trust.

And that act of itself would be sufficient to countervail almost any objection I might entertain to the passage of this bill, not inspired by the imperative and inexorable sense of public duty.

But, independent of the seductive influences of private friendship, to which I admit I am, perhaps, as susceptible as any of the gentlemen I see around me, the intrinsic merits of the measure itself are of such an extraordinary character as to commend it most strongly to the favorable consideration of every member of this House, myself not excepted, notwithstanding my constituents, in whose behalf alone I am acting here, would not be benefited by its passage one particle more than they would be by a project to cultivate an orange grove on the bleakest summit of Greenland's icy mountains.

Now, sir, as to those great trunk lines of railways, spanning the continent from ocean to ocean, I confess my mind has never been fully made up. It is true they may afford some trifling advantages to local traffic, and they may even in time become the channels of a more extended commerce. Yet I have never been thoroughly satisfied either of the necessity or expediency of projects promising such meagre results to the great body of our people. But with regard to the transcendent merits of the gigantic enterprise contemplated in this bill, I have never entertained the shadow of a doubt.

Years ago, when I first heard that there was somewhere in the vast *terra incognita*, somewhere in the bleak regions of the great northwest, a stream of water known to the nomadic inhabitants of the neighborhood as the river St. Croix, I be-

came satisfied that the construction of a railroad from that raging torrent to some point in the civilized world was essential to the happiness and prosperity of the American people, if not absolutely indispensable to the perpetuity of republican institutions on this continent.

I felt, instinctively, that the boundless resources of that prolific region of sand and pine shrubbery would never be fully developed without a railroad constructed and equipped at the expense of the government, and perhaps not then. I had an abiding presentiment that, some day or other, the people of this whole country, irrespective of party affiliations, regardless of sectional prejudices, and "without distinction of race, color, or previous condition of servitude," would rise in their majesty and demand an outlet for the enormous agricultural productions of those vast and fertile pine barrens, drained in the rainy season by the surging waters of the turbid St. Croix.

These impressions, derived simply and solely from the "eternal fitness of things," were not only strengthened by the interesting and eloquent debate on this bill, to which I listened with so much pleasure the other day, but intensified, if possible, as I read over, this morning, the lively colloquy which took place on that occasion, as I find it reported in last Friday's "Globe." I will ask the indulgence of the House while I read a few short passages, which are sufficient, in my judgment, to place the merits of the great enterprise, contemplated in the measure now under discussion, beyond all possible controversy.

The honorable gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. Wilson] who, I believe, is managing this bill, in speaking of the character of the country through which this railroad is to pass, says this:

"We want to have the timber brought to us as cheaply as possible. Now, if you tie up the lands in this way, so that no title can be obtained to them — for no settler will go on these lands, for he cannot make a living — you deprive us of the benefits of that timber."

Now, sir, I would not have it by any means inferred from this that the gentleman from Minnesota would insinuate that the people out in this section desire this timber merely for the purpose of fencing up their farms so that their stock may not wander off and die of starvation among the bleak hills of St. Croix. I read it for no such purpose, sir, and make no comment on it myself. In corroboration of this statement of the gentleman from Minnesota, I find this testimony given by the honorable gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. Washburn]. Speaking of these same lands, he says:

"Under the bill, as amended by my friend from Minnesota, nine tenths of the land is open to actual settlers at \$2.50 per acre; the remaining one tenth is pine-timbered land, that is not fit for settlement, and never will be settled upon; but the timber will be cut off. I admit that it is the most valuable portion of the grant, for most of the grant is not valuable. It is quite valueless; and if you put in this amendment of the gentleman from Indiana you may just as well kill the bill, for no man, and no company will take the grant and build the road."

I simply pause here to ask some gentleman better versed in the science of mathematics than I am, to tell me if the timbered lands are in fact the most valuable portion of that section of the country, and they would be entirely valueless without the timber that is on them, what the remainder of the land is worth which has no timber on them at all?

But, further on, I find a most entertaining and instructive interchange of views between the gentleman from Arkansas

[Mr. Rogers], the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. Washburn], and the gentleman from Maine [Mr. Peters], upon the subject of pine lands generally, which I will tax the patience of the House to read:

"Mr. Rogers — Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question?"

"Mr. Washburn — Certainly."

"Mr. Rogers — Are these pine lands entirely worthless except for timber?"

"Mr. Washburn — They are generally worthless for any other purpose. I am personally familiar with that subject. These lands are not valuable for purposes of settlement."

"Mr. Farnsworth — They will be after the timber is taken off."

"Mr. Washburn — No, sir."

"Mr. Rogers — I want to know the character of these pine lands."

"Mr. Washburn — They are generally sandy, barren lands. My friend from the Green Bay district [Mr. Sawyer] is himself perfectly familiar with this question, and he will bear me out in what I say, that these timber lands are not adapted to settlement."

"Mr. Rogers — The pine lands to which I am accustomed are generally very good. What I want to know is, what is the difference between our pine lands and your pine lands?"

"Mr. Washburn — The pine timber of Wisconsin generally grows upon barren, sandy land. The gentleman from Maine [Mr. Peters] who is familiar with pine lands, will, I have no doubt, say that pine timber grows generally upon the most barren lands."

"Mr. Peters — As a general thing pine lands are not worth much for cultivation."

And further on I find this pregnant question, the joint production of the two gentlemen from Wisconsin.

"Mr. Paine — Does my friend from Indiana suppose that in any event settlers will occupy and cultivate these pine lands?"

"Mr. Washburn — Particularly without a railroad. Yes, sir, particularly without a railroad."

It will be asked after awhile, I am afraid, if settlers will go anywhere unless the government builds a railroad for them to go on.

I desire to call attention to only one more statement, which I think sufficient to settle the question. It is one made by the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. Paine] who says:

"These lands will be abandoned for the present. It may be that at some remote period there will spring up in that region a new kind of agriculture, which will cause a demand for these particular lands; and they may then come into use and be valuable for agricultural purposes. But I know, and I cannot help thinking, that my friend from Indiana understands that, for the present, and for many years to come, these pine lands can have no possible value other than that arising from the pine timber which stands on them."

Now, sir, after listening to this emphatic and unequivocal testimony of these intelligent, competent, and able-bodied witnesses, who that is not as incredulous as St. Thomas himself will doubt for a moment that the Goshen of America is to be found in the sandy valleys and upon the pine-clad hills of the St. Croix? Who will have the hardihood to rise in his seat on this floor and assert that, excepting the pine bushes, the entire region would not produce vegetation enough in ten years to fatten a grasshopper? Where is the patriot who is willing that his country shall incur the peril of remaining another day without the amplest railroad connection with such an inexhaustible mine of agricultural wealth? Who will answer for the consequences of abandoning a great and warlike people, in the possession of a country like that, to brood over the indifference and neglect of their

government? How long would it be before they would take to studying the Declaration of Independence, and hatching out the damnable heresy of secession? How long before the grim demon of civil discord would rear again his horrid head in our midst, "gnash loud his iron fangs and shake his crest of bristling bayonets?"

Then, sir, think of the long and painful process of reconstruction that must follow, with its concomitant amendments to the constitution, the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth articles. The sixteenth, it is of course understood, is to be appropriated to those blushing damsels who are, day after day, beseeching us to let them vote, hold office, drink cocktails, ride a-straddle, and do everything else the men do. But, above all, sir, let me implore you to reflect for a single moment on the deplorable condition of our country in case of a foreign war, with all our ports blockaded, all our cities in a state of siege, the gaunt spectre of famine brooding like a hungry vulture over our starving land; our commissary stores all exhausted, and our famishing armies withering away in the field, a helpless prey to the insatiate demon of hunger; our navy rotting in the docks for want of provisions for our gallant seamen, and we without any railroad communication whatever with the prolific pine thickets of the St. Croix.

Ah, sir, I could very well understand why my amiable friends from Pennsylvania [Mr. Myers, Mr. Kelley, and Mr. O'Neill] should be so earnest in their support of this bill the other day; and, if their honorable colleague, my friend, Mr. Randall, will pardon the remark, I will say that I consider his criticism of their action on that occasion as not only unjust, but ungenerous. I knew they were looking forward with the far-reaching ken of enlightened statesmanship to the

pitiable condition in which Philadelphia will be left unless speedily supplied with railroad connection in some way or other with this garden spot of the universe.

And besides, sir, this discussion has relieved my mind of a mystery that has weighed upon it like an incubus for years. I could never understand before why there was so much excitement during the last Congress over the acquisition of *Alta Vela*. I could never understand why it was that some of our ablest statesmen and most disinterested patriots should entertain such dark forebodings of the untold calamities that were to befall our beloved country unless we should take immediate possession of that desirable island. But I see now that they were laboring under the mistaken impression that the government would need the guano to manure the public lands on the *St. Croix*.

Now, sir, I repeat, I have been satisfied for years that, if there was any portion of the inhabited globe absolutely in a suffering condition for want of a railroad it was these teeming pine barrens of the *St. Croix*. At what particular point on that noble stream such a road should be commenced I knew was immaterial, and it seems so to have been considered by the draughtsman of this bill.

It might be up at the spring or down at the foot-log, or the water-gate, or the fish-dam, or anywhere along the bank, no matter where. But, in what direction should it run, or where it should terminate, were always to my mind questions of the most painful perplexity. I could conceive of no place on "God's green earth" in such straitened circumstances for railroad facilities as to be likely to desire or willing to accept such a connection.

I knew that neither Bayfield nor Superior City would have it, for they both indignantly spurned the munificence of the

government when coupled with such ignominious conditions, and let this very same land grant die on their hands years and years ago, rather than submit to the degradation of a direct communication by railroad with the piney woods of the *St. Croix*; and I knew that what the enterprising inhabitants of those giant young cities would refuse to take, would have few charms for others, whatever their necessities or cupidity might be.

Hence, as I have said, sir, I was utterly at a loss to determine where the terminus of this great and indispensable road should be, until I accidentally overheard some gentleman the other day mention the name of "Duluth."

"Duluth!" The word fell upon my ear with a peculiar and indescribable charm, like the gentle murmur of a low fountain stealing forth in the midst of roses; or the soft, sweet accents of an angel's whisper in the bright joyous dream of sleeping innocence.

"Duluth!" 'Twas the name for which my soul had panted for years, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks.

But where was "Duluth?"

Never in all my limited reading, had my vision been gladdened by seeing the celestial word in print. And I felt a profound humiliation in my ignorance that its dulcet syllables had never before ravished my delighted ear. I was certain the draughtsman in this bill had never heard of it, or it would have been designated as one of the termini of this road. I asked my friends about it, but they knew nothing of it. I rushed to the library, and examined all the maps I could find. I discovered in one of them a delicate hair-like line, diverging from the Mississippi near a place marked Prescott, which, I supposed, was intended to represent the river *St. Croix*, but could nowhere find "Duluth."