

LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY

OPPOSITION MEETING for owners and occupiers of lands In the county of NORTHAMPTON White Horse Inn. Towcester. 30th Dec 1830

AT A MEETING of the PROPRIETORS and OCCUPIERS of LANDS in the COUNTY of NORTHAMPTON, through which the projected LONDON and BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY is intended to pass, holden at the White House Inn, at Towcester, on the 30th Day of December, 1830 (pursuant to public Advertisement), for the Purpose of considering the Subject, and adapting such Measures as may be expedient on the Occasion,

(Sir WILLIAM WAKE, Bart. In the Chair),

Resolved unanimously.

That it is the Opinion of this Meeting that the said Railway will do great Injury to the Properties through which it is to pass.

- 1st. By destroying the Privacy and Unity of the Farms, and cutting off Parts thereof from the Homesteads.
- 2dly. By dividing into separate, ill-shaped Fragments, Closes which are now convenient in their Form, Size, and Quality.
- 3dly. By occasioning deep Cuttings across the Slopes of the Hills, and thereby intercepting the Supply of Water to the Wells and Grounds below them.
- 4thly. By occasioning large Embankments across the low Lands, and thereby intercepting the natural Drainage of the Parts above them.
- 5thly. By requiring in numerous Cases so great a Width for Slopes, in Addition to that of the Railway itself, as to render any Communication between the Lands separated by it extremely difficult and inconvenient.
- 2d. That it is the Opinion of this Meeting that it will occasion great Inconvenience to the Public, from the Interruption of the Parochial and other Highways; and that where it crosses them on the same Level it will endanger the Lives of the Passengers.
- 3d. That there is already Conveyance for Travellers between London and Birmingham by numerous Coaches every day, at the Rate of ten Miles an Hour, and Water Carriage for heavy Goods, to a greater Extent than has ever been required.
- 4th. That no Necessity has been shown for accelerated Communication beyond what can be supplied by Means at present in Existence, and such

Improvements as are constantly taking place thereon.

- 5th. That this Meeting are not aware of any Advantages likely to be produced by the said Railway sufficient to countervail the certain Evils that will be inflicted by it.
- 6th. That the Scheme is not promoted (with very few Exceptions) by Persons interested as Land-owners in the District of Country through which it is proposed to be carried, but by Persons combined together in Pursuit of private Gain, and who are themselves exempt from the Evils they would inflict on others. That the Absence of the Support of the Landowners is an undeniable Proof that the Speculation is uncalled-for by the Wants or Wishes of the Country.
- 7th. That the Persons whose Property and Comforts are to be sacrificed to these Objects, are some of them Noblemen and Gentlemen, upon whose Places of Residence large Capitals have been expended in Decoration and Convenience, which Capital will be newly annihilated; and others of them are respectable Yeomen, who dread the Injury that will be done to their respective Properties, and feel severely the Hardship imposed upon them, either of sustaining the Evil, or being burdened with the Expense of Resistance.
- 8th. That this Meeting are far from wishing that may undue Attention should be paid to their individual Interests, but that they feel it a Duty to themselves and the Community to protest against such a Violation of private Rights, unless a public Benefit of correspondent Magnitude and established Certainty would be obtained by the Sacrifice.
- 9th. That this Meeting is strongly impressed with the fact that Endeavour has been made to obtain the Assent of the Landowners to this Measure, by exhibiting a Plan which affords no Information as to the Evils which this Meeting apprehends as detailed in their final Resolution.
- 10th. That from the ... Information within their reach, it appears that the Expenses will be far greater than the Public are led to expect, and that there is no Probability of any adequate Remuneration to the Persons who may be inducted to embark their Capital thereon.
- 11th. That independently of their own separate interests, they cannot, as Members of the Community, contemplate with Indifference the Amount of Distress that would be occasioned by a Work of this

extent being permitted to be carried on under Calculations so extremely Vague, and a Scheme so entirely undigested.

12th. That a Committee be appointed to ascertain the S. liment of Pareous affected by the other Counties through which the Line passes, and to enquire whether they are disposed to join in a public Notification of dissent and a Petition to the House of Commons against the Bill.

13th. That the following Persons be members of the said Committee, with Power to add to their Number, and that any three of them be competent to act, viz.:- Sir William Wake, Bart.; Sir Charles Knightley, Bart.; Thomas Reave Thornton, Edward Bouverie, Lamb, Esquires.

14th. That a subscription be entered into, for de.ing the Expense of the said Enquiry, and such others Matters as this be thought advisable by the Committee for furthering the Objects of their Constituents.

15th. That Subscriptions be received by Messrs. Warkins & Son, Daventry; Messrs. Percival, at Northampton; and Messrs. Praed & Co. London.

16th. That Mr. E. S. Burton be appointed Solicitor and Agent to act under the Superintendence of the Committee.

17th. That these Resolutions be printed in the County New-papers, and that Copies thereof be circulated amongst the Proprietors and Occupiers of Lands through which the intended Railway is to pass.

Resolved,

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to the Gentlemen by whom this Meeting was called.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Mr. Thornton, the Mover, and Mr. Bouverie, the Seconder of these Resolutions.

WILLIAM WAKE, Chairman.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Sir William Wake, for his Kindness in taking the Chair, and his able Conduct therein.

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LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY

DEC 1830

REPLY to the resolutions contained in the report on the TOWCESTER MEETING

Land owners v. Shareholders

LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY.

AT a Meeting of Landowners and Tenantry, held at the White Horse Inn, Towcester, on the 30th of December, 1830, Sir W. Wake, Bart, is the Chair, some Resolutions were proposed and after considerable discussion agreed to, expressive of the opinions of the majority of the meeting on the subject of the proposed London and Birmingham Railway.

These Resolutions have been advertised in the Northampton and some other papers; and as the showed object of the Meeting is to unite various parties in opposition to the Railway, upon grounds which seem be founded on a misconception of the nature of the undertaking, as well as of the means of executing it, some notice of these Resolutions on the part of those who take an interest in such undertakings appears to be called for.

As a body of men, accustomed to business and to examine with attention in their individual transactions, the probabilities of success in the perpetual changes which circumstances may require in ... varied concerns of man's occupation and labour, ... readily be conceded that the Directors of ... London and Birmingham Railway might ap...l with confidence to the tribunal of public opinion against the opinions of the Towcester Meeting, both as it respects the "probability of adequate remuneration to the persons who may embark their capital" in the Railway and the amount of capital which will be required to execute the work.

The estimates, it is well understood, have been made with care and consideration, and there is no need for argument on this point.

But it is also ...ted of the promoters of the Railway that they are "persons combined together in the pursuit of private gain," and although it is not said that these persons are illegally or dishonourably acting in this combination, the insinuation is obvious.

The London and Birmingham Railway Company are under the impression that in seeking their private gain by honest and honourable means they will at the same timelly benefit the public, and upon this ground they take their stand and look for public support.

With this preamble we proceed to notice those Resolution which evidently proceed from misconception or ignorance of the subject, but which we must take leave to say are at the same time disingenuous, because we know that the London and Birmingham Railway Company, aware of the intended meeting at Towcester, sent a Deputation of their body to the spot, not merely as a mark of regret to the country gentlemen who had

called to meeting, but with the wish and intention to afford such ...tion as would have prevented these very misconception.

That Deputation the meeting, however, declined to hear.

The ...miss... ..nt is that ...plied in the first resolution which follows up the ..ble:-

“That it is the opinion of this Meeting that the said Railway will do great injury to the properties through which it is to pass.”

“1st. By destroying the privacy and unity at the farms, and cutting ... part thereof from the homesteads.”

We had thought that the privacy of a farm was one of the worst circumstancesding.. the farms which enjoy this ..viable privacy are those which are in thes of our island, while hardly more product is grown than ...s the little neighbourhood around, where agriculture is in its rudest form and ... at the lowest point of depression. A farm on a great public thoroughfare is worth twice as much as one in a village lane, and every farmer knows it.

Again the advantage of a farm consists not only in the ease at communication of its various fields with each other and the homestead, but in the readiness with which manure, lime, & c. can be brought to it, and its produce carried to market; a railroad through a long struggling would be the greatest blessing to the farmer.

And with respect to the apprehended severing of of the homesteads, we have only to say, that every facility of communication will be given by bridges over and arches under the railway, and the levels will be preserved as much as possible, in order that no increased draught be required.

With respect to the second resolution, which fears that “closes which are now convenient in form, size, and quality,” will be divided into “ill-shaped fragments,” our short answer may suffice – the railway bill will provide the tallest indemnity for every injury to the owners and occupiers at land.

The third resolution deprecates the “deep cuttings across the slopes of the hill,” thereby intercepting the supply of water to the wells and grounds below them. This we can conceive to be certainly a misconception, owing to the fact that some such affects might have flowed from canals.

But Canals it might be remembered are monopolizers of water; a railway on the contrary will be glad to disperse it around; and collecting, as it will do, the water into the ditches or drains on each side, it will afford a most admirable means of artificial irrigation, more fertilising than the natural supply, because more judiciously directed.

Besides, it must not be forgotten, that the railway will act as a drain to those lands not ..saturated with water, and do that for the farmer which he has perhaps long meditated without having the means to execute.

We know that none of these apprehended ills have followed as consequences of the Liverpool and Manchester railway.

The fourth resolution ascribes to “large embankments across the low lands, the effect of intercepting the natural drainage of the parts above them.

The answer to this objection is, that the Railway will cross valleys through which streams run by viaducts, and that all watercourses will be maintained free, and the requisite outlets and drains afforded.

The fifth resolution anticipates “difficulty and inconvenience in the communication between the lands separated by the railway, because of the great width required for slopes in addition to the railway itself.” It is necessary to observe, that if we admit some of those dreaded consequences as possible, not probable contingencies, it does not follow that they are to obtain along the whole line of the railway; the probability is, that they will actually take place in very few instances, and in these cases the proprietor and the occupier can make their respective bargains; damage, where it really exists, is always calculable, and may be measured by money.

We repeat, that the mere separation of parts of a farm, when it does take place, by any width of slope, however great, will be amply remunerated by the abundant and numerous conveniences which the Railway will bring to the farm, independent of the first compensation.

We now come to a series of supplementary opinions, in which the meeting, cutting the ground it before occupied as agriculturists, and pronouncing upon matters more immediately belonging to their calling, has placed itself in the attitude of defender of the public against the aggressions of the Railway Company.

The meeting tells us, that where the Railway “crosses the parochial and other highways on the same level, it will occasion great inconvenience to the public, and endanger the lives of passengers.” We speak advisedly when we say, that the proposed Railway will pass either over or under all great thoroughfares, and in preserving the existing communications every precaution will be taken to protect the public from risk.

The meeting next pronounces, authoritatively that there is present means of conveyance for passengers by coaches, and for heavy goods by water carriage, “to a greater extent than has ever been required.” We are of opinion that the sufficiency of the means of transport is measured by the cost, and in the inverse order.

But with respect to the sufficiency of the present means of transport, we would ask, what is the consequence of a hard frost to the working class of the midland counties, when coals are frozen up in the canals? They whom a bounteous Providence has enabled to meet every exigency and provide for every contingency, should remember that the bulk of mankind live only from hand to mouth; and they should be the last to throw impediments in the way of that improvement which would give

to the labouring man the means of supplying, by the results of his daily labour, his daily wants.

Is this consideration to weigh as nothing in the scale, against apprehended inconvenience to – “the comforts of those Noblemen and Gentlemen upon whose places of residence large capitals have been expended in decoration?” Is it, we ask, of no importance at this time of distress and pauperism, of wretchedness and crime of reckless misery and abandoned hope; of whole parishes driven onward against social order in all the fury of despair; - is it nothing that this “scheme of persons combined together in the pursuit of gain,” will give employment to thousands of labourers, and bring into circulation a capital of millions now lying comparatively unproductive!

“Means of conveyance to a greater extent than has ever been required!” Is cheapness of conveyance no object with the public? Are Canal shares at a premium or discount? And if at a premium *as they certainly are), what has occasioned it but the absence of competition, which is the best security to the public from monopoly prices.

Is it not notorious that the riches of many mineral districts are, to a great extent, excluded from the London market by the heavy expence of canal transport?

Again, the Meeting declares “that no necessity has been shown for accelerated communication.”

The fact of the proposal to make a Railway, is proof of the necessity of “accelerated” and cheaper conveyance.

If the necessity did not exist and press heavily upon the trading community, the men who now support this Railway would never have embarked in the undertaking; for without that necessity the Railway would not pay. And let the public say who are the best judges of this necessity, a few land-owners of Northamptonshire, or the men we refer to, far more numerous and equally respectable, whose every-day business is impeded and subjected to loss by the present dear and slow method of conveyance for themselves and their goods. Let the town of Northampton be consulted on this point.

It is asserted, that the absence of the support of the Land-owners is an undeniable proof that speculation is uncalled for by the wants or wishes of the country.² We do not wish to speak in discourteous terms of the Country Gentlemen, although they have cast upon us the odium of being mere money-seeking speculators; and therefore we shall only observe that the absence of support to the Railway from certain Land-owners of Northamptonshire, cannot be considered as conclusive evidence of the “wants or wishes of the country.”

This resolution is clearly a non sequitur.

We will, however, venture an opinion in opposition to that of this resolution; we think that the land-owners in not supporting the Railway are acting against the best interests of their tenantry, to say nothing of themselves. For we are persuaded that they, of

all people, will receive from this great work a more lasting benefit than any of the persons engaged in it.

The Towcester Meeting has, however, placed the question at ... in their eighth opinion, upon the only ground that is ...ble; upon its being- that is, the Railway being a “public benefit of correspondent magnitude and established certainty.”

The term “correspondent” is here used in connexion with the apprehended ill consequences which we hope we have proved to be illusory and vague, if not impossible; and where they may accidentally arise, to be counterbalanced by much greater advantages. Upon this issue we are, however, willing to join.

The Railway being put upon its merits with the public, we have no fear of the result. Let us see what it will do. It will convey inside passengers at the rate of 2d a mile, and outside for 1?d. The coach fares are now at least 4d. and 2?d. It will carry these passengers at double the average speed of coach travelling, and with less of risk. It will carry goods at a speed of fifteen miles an hour at a much lower rate than has hitherto been charged by canals. In proof of which we would refer to the reduction which has been made in rates of water conveyance from Manchester to Liverpool since the Railway between those places has been opened for the carriage of goods. The cost of conveying goods by the fly vans is at least 9d. per ton per mile, at a speed of five miles per hour.

We defy the Towcester meeting to gainsay these facts. Whoever doubts let him go to Liverpool or Manchester and learn. A learned Sergeant, in, no presume, a professional speech, assured the meeting that so entire a failure was the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, that shares were at a discount. We have had tolerable experience of the gullibility of a mixed meeting; but we should not be so simple as to commit ourselves by assertions which a more reference to almost any local newspaper would serve to refute; the learned Gentleman no doubt thought he was right, and he must have mistaken discount for premium, as the Liverpool and Manchester shares are selling at nearly one hundred per cent. on the original cost.

Respecting our assertions we challenge enquiry and desire discussion ...fied that the more rigidly the claims of Rail-roads to public support are examined, the more clear and evident will their advantages appear.

The Directors of the London and Birmingham Railway Company would no doubt willingly have gone to parliament trusting to a sober and dispassionate examination of their plans and prospects; but their opponents having now struck the first blow, and appealed to public opinion, they may hail the opportunity of an encounter in such an arena.

It is expected that all the great towns and the trading districts through which the proposed Railway is to pass, will hold meetings and pass resolutions declaratory of their wants and

expectations on this important question of cheap and rapid internal communication.

A shareholder in the London and Birmingham, and a Proprietor in the Liverpool...