

THE  
TORONTO & GEORGIAN BAY  
SHIP CANAL.

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REPLY TO CERTAIN QUERIES

OF THE

HONORABLE THE CANAL COMMITTEE OF THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT.

BY WILLIAM BROSS, A.M.,  
OF THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE.

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1864.

## R E P L Y .

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CHICAGO DAILY TRIBUNE OFFICE,  
APRIL 20TH, 1864.

*To the Honorable the Canal Committee,  
of the Canadian Parliament.*

GENTLEMEN :

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, embracing several queries in relation to the proposed Georgian Bay Canal, of which the following is a copy :

CANADA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,  
COMMITTEE ROOM No. 16,  
15TH MARCH, 1864.

SIR: \*

I beg to inform you that I am instructed by the committee appointed to consider the practicability and propriety of constructing a Ship Canal between the Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario, *via* Lake Simcoe, to transmit you the following queries, to be answered at your earliest convenience :

*Question No. 1.* — Will you state to the committee your opinion, (1) as to the advantages that would accrue to the North-Western States by the construction of the Toronto and Georgian Bay Ship Canal; (2) the prospects of a remunerative return on the capital expended in its construction, taking the estimates and reports of Messrs. Mason and Tully as the basis, published in 1858; and (3) whether any interest in such a work would be taken by capitalists and merchants in the United States.

*Question No. 2.* — Also, the advantages, if any, that the Georgian Bay route would possess over others, as to time,

distance and the general convenience with respect to trade and commerce, more particularly in reference to return cargoes.

*Question No. 3.* — Also, whether the construction of other proposed routes, or the enlargement of the Welland Canal, would be more advisable than the construction of the Toronto and Georgian Bay Ship Canal, to meet the requirements of the Western trade.

Respectfully Yours,

J. W. MAC EDWARDS,

WILLIAM BROSS, Esq.,

*Clerk to Committee.*

*Chicago Tribune.*

To these queries I beg leave respectfully to submit the following reply.

To nearly all the points embraced in them it might be a sufficient answer to make the general statement, that the census returns of 1860 have confirmed nearly all the anticipations of the reports of Messrs. Mason and Tully on the Georgian Bay Canal, and more especially, the figures put down for that year, in the table on page seventeen of that document. Indeed, in most, if not all cases, the facts, as shown by census and other reliable reports, exceed the estimates of Messrs. Mason and Tully, and I have no doubt whatever that such will continue to be the result of all prudent calculations for half a century to come.

But to be more specific—

I. You inquire, *first*, “As to the advantages that would accrue to the North-Western States by the construction of the Toronto and Georgian Bay Ship Canal.”

I answer, their continued settlement and development are dependent upon the opening of new and greatly increased facilities for the transit of their products to the ocean. So largely has production increased upon the means of transit, that in 1861 the Erie Canal was clogged with business. Freights were so high and prices for farm products so low, that in many sections of the West, corn in large quantities was actually used for fuel. But before entering into particulars, allow me to ask your attention to the extent of the North-West, whose commerce is to be fostered by, and will con-

tribute to, the business of the Georgian Bay Canal; the amount of land under cultivation in 1860; its present commerce and rapid growth;— all of which may tend to give you some fair estimate of the traffic of the proposed canal.

Were the increased facilities for transit to the ocean which the Georgian Bay Ship Canal, especially if it were constructed as recommended, to pass ocean-bound vessels of a thousand tons burthen, afforded to the commerce of Lake Michigan, trade would certainly be attracted from points as far south as St. Louis. The territory west of Lake Michigan and north of a line running east and west through St. Louis, and east of the Rocky Mountains, and capable of sustaining a dense and prosperous population, consists, in round numbers, of seven hundred thousand square miles. In this statement ample allowance is made for whatever of the "great American desert" lies within the limits under consideration. The report of H. U. Hind, Esq., geologist of the recent Canadian exploring expedition, shows that there are four hundred thousand square miles of territory lying within the valleys of the Saskatchewan, the Assiniboine, and of the other rivers that flow into Lake Winnipeg. So that it is safe to say that there are one million one hundred thousand square miles of the richest land upon the globe, for whose commerce the Georgian Bay Canal would compete with the Erie Canal and the great lines of railway between the West and the seaboard. There is, therefore, territory enough within the limits of the United States, between Lake Michigan and the Rocky Mountains, to form seventeen States as large as Ohio, and whoever has studied its climate, soil and resources, knows they would be vastly richer and more productive. In addition to these, there is a country west of Lake Winnipeg, and east of the mountains within the British Possessions, rich in everything that can give wealth and prosperity to a people, amply sufficient to form ten more States as large as Ohio. And yet, in all this vast fertile country, west of Lakes Michigan and Winnipeg, there are but little more than half as many square miles of land under cultivation as there are in the single State of Illinois.

If we go back for figures previous to 1850, showing the growth of the territory west of the Lakes, more marked results are obtained than we find since, for, comparatively speaking, the

country had only just begun to be developed. The increase of the last ten years, as shown by the following table, carefully compiled from the census reports, is sufficiently striking. The statistics include Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and the northern half of Missouri:

	1850.	1860.
Land under cultivation—square miles.....	13,100	33,323
Population.....	1,696,174	3,768,216
Wheat, bushels.....	15,232,688	50,601,142
Corn, ".....	68,309,537	167,366,623
Oats, ".....	15,086,840	34,477,045
Swine, number.....	2,399,164	3,635,092
Cattle, ".....	1,234,092	2,673,704

These figures show a most astonishing progress. They demonstrate an appreciation in a single decade of from nearly a hundred to more than three hundred per cent.

I beg your special attention to the following statistics taken from the carefully prepared yearly tables of the *Chicago Tribune*. As Chicago is the great commercial centre of the North-West, these figures will tend still further to illustrate the rapid growth of the North-West, and the pressing necessity for greatly enlarged facilities to transport her products to the ocean. They vary somewhat with the abundance of the crops, and the demand for them, financial embarrassments, etc., but they certainly show a most wonderful development of the resources of the West.

TOTAL RECEIPTS OF FLOUR AND GRAIN FOR FOUR YEARS.

	1860.	1861.	1862.	1863.
Wheat, bush.....	14,568,429	17,539,909	13,728,116	11,180,344
Corn, bush.....	15,487,966	26,543,233	29,449,328	26,450,508
Oats, bush.....	2,029,906	1,883,258	4,138,722	9,139,626
Rye, bush.....	295,436	479,005	1,038,825	839,760
Barley, bush.....	623,005	417,129	872,053	1,098,346
Total.....	33,004,742	46,862,534	49,227,044	48,708,483
Add Flour into Wheat...	3,500,030	7,230,865	8,331,953	7,371,420
Total.....	36,504,776	54,093,219	57,558,999	56,079,903

**TOTAL SHIPMENTS OF FLOUR AND GRAIN FROM CHICAGO FOR  
FOUR YEARS.**

	1860.	1861.	1862.	1863.
Wheat, bush.....	12,487,684	15,788,385	13,808,898	9,341,881
Corn, bush.....	13,743,172	24,186,382	29,452,610	24,444,147
Oats, bush.....	1,039,799	1,655,384	3,112,366	7,574,994
Rye, bush.....	129,156	422,492	871,796	835,133
Barley, bush.....	290,211	185,293	532,195	668,735
Total.....	27,690,002	42,237,936	47,777,865	42,864,890
Add Flour into Wheat.....	3,566,695	7,125,445	8,699,245	7,683,455
Total.....	31,256,697	49,363,381	56,477,110	50,548,345

**SHIPMENT OF FLOUR (REDUCED TO WHEAT) AND GRAIN, FROM  
CHICAGO, FOR TWENTY-SIX YEARS.**

Years.	Wheat. bushels.	Corn. bushels.	Oats. bushels.	Rye. bushels.	Barley. bushels.	Total. bushels.
1838....	78	.....	.....	.....	.....	78
1839....	3,678	.....	.....	.....	.....	3,678
1840....	10,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	10,000
1841....	40,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	40,000
1842....	586,907	.....	.....	.....	.....	586,907
1843....	688,907	.....	.....	.....	.....	688,907
1844....	923,494	.....	.....	.....	.....	923,494
1845....	1,024,620	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,024,620
1846....	1,599,619	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,599,619
1847....	2,136,994	67,135	38,892	.....	.....	2,243,021
1848....	2,286,000	566,460	65,280	.....	.....	3,001,740
1849....	2,192,809	644,848	26,849	31,453	.....	2,769,111
1850....	1,387,989	262,013	186,054	22,372	.....	1,830,938
1851....	799,380	3,221,317	605,827	19,997	.....	4,646,291
1852....	941,470	2,757,011	2,030,317	127,028	17,315	5,873,141
1853....	1,680,998	2,780,253	1,748,493	120,275	82,162	6,412,181
1854....	2,744,860	6,837,899	3,239,987	148,421	41,153	12,932,320
1855....	7,110,270	7,547,678	1,888,533	92,032	20,132	16,633,700
1856....	9,419,365	11,129,658	1,014,547	19,051	590	21,533,221
1857....	10,783,292	6,814,615	316,778	17,993	.....	18,032,678
1858....	10,909,243	7,493,212	1,498,134	127,008	7,569	20,035,166
1859....	10,759,359	4,217,654	1,174,177	478,162	131,449	16,753,795
1860....	16,054,379	13,743,172	1,039,779	129,156	290,211	31,256,697
1861....	22,913,830	24,186,382	1,653,384	422,492	185,293	49,363,381
1862....	22,902,765	29,452,610	3,112,666	871,796	532,195	56,477,110
1863....	17,925,336	24,444,147	7,574,994	835,133	668,735	50,548,345

**RECEIPTS AND SHIPMENTS OF HOGS AND BEEF CATTLE, IN CHICAGO,  
FOR NINE YEARS.**

YEAR.	HOGS.		BEEVES.	
	Received.	Shipped.	Received.	Shipped.
1855 .....	302,068	145,580	10,715	8,258
1856 .....	293,625	281,540	21,950	22,502
1857 .....	251,115	131,216	48,624	25,502
1858 .....	530,009	176,368	118,151	43,149
1859 .....	281,496	212,840	90,574	35,978
1860 .....	355,654	156,284	155,753	104,122
1861 .....	675,002	280,094	204,579	124,146
1862 .....	1,848,890	491,135	269,655	112,745
1863 .....	1,900,519	810,453	298,381	203,217

**RECEIPTS OF LUMBER, SHINGLES, LATH, ETC., IN CHICAGO, FOR  
SEVENTEEN YEARS.**

YEAR.	Lumber. feet.	Shingles. No.	Lath. No.
1863 .....	393,074,882	152,485,633	41,665,000
1862 .....	299,365,000	131,225,000	23,880,000
1861 .....	249,309,000	79,356,000	32,697,000
1860 .....	255,147,000	133,578,000	30,509,000
1859 .....	295,710,832	165,087,000	49,548,210
1858 .....	268,616,000	125,788,000	44,517,000
1857 .....	444,396,300	130,462,000	79,650,000
1856 .....	441,961,900	135,876,000	79,235,120
1855 .....	297,567,669	158,770,000	46,487,550
1854 .....	228,336,783	82,061,250	32,431,550
1853 .....	202,101,098	93,483,784	39,733,116
1852 .....	147,816,232	77,080,500	19,759,670
1851 .....	125,056,437	60,338,250	27,533,475
1850 .....	100,364,779	55,423,750	19,809,700
1849 .....	73,259,553	39,057,750	19,281,733
1848 .....	60,009,250	20,000,000	10,025,109
1847 .....	32,118,225	12,148,500	5,655,700

**TONNAGE OF CHICAGO.**

	Arrivals.	Tonnage.	Men.
No. of arrivals, etc., in 1863 .....	8,678	2,172,699	76,649
No. of arrivals, etc., in 1862 .....	7,417	1,931,692	67,774
Increase .....	1,261	241,007	8,875
No. of clearances in 1863 .....		8,457	
No. of clearances in 1862 .....		7,270	
Increase .....		1,187	

## Duties received at this port, for the years—

1861.	1862.	1863.
\$22,768.70	\$66,500.04	\$161,212.79

*Second.* "Prospects of a remunerative return on capital," etc.

The answer to this query may be deduced from the above statistics, and the estimates in the table, page seventeen, of the report of Col. Mason. I may premise, however, that in 1861, as before stated, the Erie Canal was completely clogged with freight; prices of grain were so low that corn was used as fuel within two hundred and fifty miles of Chicago, and had it not been for the competition of the Welland and St. Lawrence Canals, it is impossible to estimate to what figure freights would have risen. Since then, the great demand for Western products to supply the armies of the Mississippi, and in fact also of the seaboard, and the depreciation of our currency, have largely appreciated the prices of Western products, and our people have therefore been prosperous. But when we are again forced to rely upon foreign markets to take our surplus of provisions, cereals, etc., and especially when it is vastly enhanced by the return of our soldiers to industrial pursuits, the vital question will again return, how is this vast surplus to be transported to the ocean?

The best friends of the canal can scarcely hope that a work of so much magnitude can be completed before the year 1875. The table above, taken from the census, shows that the increase for ten years of population, production, etc., in the territory west of Lake Michigan, has been from nearly a hundred to three hundred per cent. The ratio of increase adopted by Col. Mason for every five years, in the table, page seventeen of his report, is only twenty-nine per cent., and his estimate of revenues for the canal, based on these figures, in 1875, is \$1,835,037. This sum would pay six per cent. on the entire cost of the canal, \$22,200,000, and leave a surplus of half a million of dollars to pay for repairs, operating expenses, etc., of the canal. The subsequent figures, viz.: \$2,367,198 for 1880, \$3,053,686 for 1885, \$3,939,254 for 1890, and \$5,081,638 for 1895, he who will study the extent and the resources of the North-West cannot doubt for a moment will be more than realized. The limit of profitable production at the West, owing to the want of adequate facilities of transit to the ocean, is now very nearly reached; but if stim-

ulated by the certainty of the completion of the Georgian Bay Canal by the year 1875, so that vessels of a thousand tons burthen could pass directly from the ocean to Chicago, and return with wheat, corn and provisions in bulk direct for Liverpool, he would be a bold speculator who would venture now to put down the figures that would represent our products and exports even in 1875. Within the next quarter of a century the great Central Pacific Railway will be built, and beyond a doubt, also the line north-west from Chicago through St. Paul, the valleys of the Red River and the Saskatchewan, to Vancouver's Sound; the Illinois and Michigan Canal will be greatly enlarged, and railways will be in operation in all directions through the vast and fertile West. The gold-bearing regions of Colorado, Idaho, and at the head waters of the Saskatchewan, will have attracted an immense population, and there can scarcely be a doubt that the figures for the population of the North-West, viz., 16,609,044, estimated by Col. Mason to be then in the North-West, will be largely exceeded. He would prove himself ignorant of the past and faithless of the future, who could doubt that so many millions of intelligent, industrious and energetic Anglo Saxons, in a country so vast and so rich in agricultural and mineral resources as the North-West, would furnish ample and remunerative business, not only for the Georgian Bay Canal, but for the Erie, the Ottawa and the Welland, and for all the railways that may be built between the Lakes and the Atlantic seaboard. Thus far at least, the boldest speculator has never been able to keep pace with the growth of the North-West in wealth, population and power, and such I predict will be true for the next century.

*Third.* "What interest will be taken in the work by capitalists in the United States."

For the present and many years to come I dare not promise or hope for much. The accumulated capital and the monied power of the country is concentrated mainly in New York, and New York, from the necessities of her position, must bitterly oppose, so far as she can, any scheme which would certainly rob her of the control of the commerce of the continent. She will not only refuse her own capital; but she would exert all her influence and power to prevent the West from affording pecuniary or other aid to any great Canadian enterprise. As to the West, the opportunities to use

money are so many, and the results generally so profitable, that large sums for such an investment could not be obtained. And besides, comparatively speaking, we have very little accumulated capital. There is not to-day half banking capital enough in Chicago to do the business of the city. I have no doubt, however, that the members of our Board of Trade, our merchants and capitalists, and those of Milwaukee, and other points to be benefited directly by the work, would subscribe to the extent of their ability; but whatever is done would be to encourage it on account of the benefits to be received by them and the West generally, and not because they have spare capital to invest. In general, I may add, that I believe the press and people of the West will give the work all the pecuniary and other encouragement in their power.

## II. Comparison of routes.

As to distance, the difference between the Georgian Bay and Toronto route and that by the Ottawa, is merely nominal. Between Chicago and Quebec the route by the Georgian Bay Canal is about three hundred miles shorter than that by the Welland. As to the matter of time, I think that experience could alone furnish a reliable result, but if the long, close canal and river navigation of the Ottawa be compared with that of Lake Ontario, and the broad, deep channel of the St. Lawrence, there can scarcely be a doubt that the time of the transit of a vessel from a given point on Lake Huron to Montreal, would be largely in favor of the Georgian Bay route. As to the general convenience of commerce and the matter of return freights, the difference is, in my judgment, very largely in favor of the Toronto and Georgian Bay Canal.

What the millions of Great Britain need, and what her statesmen and capitalists at home and those of Canada, it is believed, are striving to provide, is, cheap food, and a large, steady and paying market for her manufactures. The hundreds of miles of the proposed Ottawa canal and river improvement must, as I think, always be conducted by barges, requiring transshipments at both ends of the route. The St. Clair flats will always form a troublesome barrier to ocean vessels in reaching Lake Michigan by the Welland Canal. And besides, the money required to

enlarge the Welland Canal would go very far toward the construction of the Georgian Bay Canal, where it can be used more effectually to promote the interests of Great Britain, Canada and the great and growing North-West. The great central highway for the commerce of the continent, if I read the purposes of Providence aright, was designed by him who formed it to pass from the Georgian Bay through Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario. There a channel can be secured, broad and deep, through which the vessels and propellers can pass, laden with the products of British skill and industry, directly from London and Liverpool, to supply the millions who shall dwell in the mighty valleys of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, and having performed their mission, they could return filled with the beef, the pork, the lard, and the golden grains of the teeming West. The dangers and the expense of transshipment, always, if possible, to be avoided in commerce, would thus be entirely removed. The products of the West would now go to Europe by the St. Lawrence probably a hundred fold more than they do, could the Quebec and Montreal lines bring back the foreign goods consumed by the West. For the last year, and, if I mistake not, for two or three years past, a bushel of corn and wheat could be delivered from two to five cents cheaper at the wharves of Montreal, than they could at those of New York; but the large return freights from Europe received by New York vessels, gave them on the round trip the advantage over the Canadian lines. Build the Georgian Bay Canal, so that England could send her products in vessels of a thousand tons burthen in bulk directly to the consumers west of Lake Michigan, and the advantage would be turned in their favor. Great Britain, according to what I believe reliable statistics, imported from all countries, of grain and meal, in 1861, 16,094,941 quarters, of which 5,398,176, or more than one-third, were from the United States; and I think it was Mr. Cobden who stated, in a speech at Rochdale, that had not a supply been obtained from the United States, there was not gold enough in Lombard street to buy it, for other nations could not possibly spare so large a surplus. There can scarcely be a doubt that the building of the Georgian Bay Canal would so largely cheapen the price of grain, that in less than five years, England would save on the price of her food more than the canal would cost.

Of eight bushels of corn starting from Iowa or Illinois for Liverpool, from six to seven bushels are consumed in freight, so that the consumers get but one. Give the people of Great Britain, by cheapening freights through the construction of the Georgian Bay Canal, four or five bushels of the eight instead of one, and England would at once appreciate the importance of her Canadian colonies. I therefore sincerely believe that the imperial government could well afford to advance all the capital to build this great continental thoroughfare, and not only make money, but feed her people sumptuously by the operation.

III. I find I have incidentally given my views in favor of the Georgian Bay route. I may add that by it there would be little if any more close canal navigation than by the Welland; the route is some three hundred miles shorter, and the navigation by the Detroit river and over the St. Clair flats would be avoided. For the passage of ocean vessels and steamers with manufactured goods in bulk bound inward, and grain and provisions also in bulk outward bound, the Ottawa cannot be compared with the Georgian Bay route, for the hundreds of miles of close canal and river navigation, in my judgment, make it available only for barges, while by the other, vessels of a thousand tons burthen can pass directly from the producer to the consumer, and thus the commercial necessities both of England and America be fully accommodated.

In regard to the cost of transit by the different routes, I beg leave to refer for facts on this branch of the subject to the tables in the reports of Messrs. Mason and Tully. In regard to the extent and the resources of the North-West, its present industrial and commercial status, and the vital necessity of greatly increased facilities of transit for our products to the ocean, I beg leave to solicit the attention of the Honorable Committee to the report of the Committee on Statistics to the National Canal Convention held in this city in June last. Of that Committee I had the honor to be a member, and as the facts and statistics there presented are accurate and comprehensive, I submit them as exhaustive of the subject. You will find the report commencing on page sixty-three of the published proceedings. I also solicit your attention to the memorial by a Committee of Congress to

the President and to Congress upon the same subject, at the close of the proceedings, in the document above referred to.

I am well aware that these facts are presented from an American and not from a Canadian stand-point. They are intended to influence Congress to make appropriations to enlarge the Erie and the Illinois and Michigan canals. Strong appeals are made to Congress to enlarge these canals as an essential means of defense in case of a war with Great Britain—from such fearful calamity may “The Good Lord ever deliver” these great Christian nations—but all the facts and statistics presented in the reports, viewed commercially and in a friendly national spirit, plead with equal eloquence and force for the opening of the Georgian Bay, the enlargement of the Welland, and the construction of the Ottawa Canal. I have not a particle of doubt that long before the close of the century, the West will crowd them, and also the Erie Canal, with all the business they can possibly do. She will be able and willing to pay for all the manufactured goods Europe can send through these great thoroughfares; and Europe will gladly take the vast surplus food-products of the West, to feed her hungry millions of people.

The fact that the Georgian Bay Canal would be in the territory of Great Britain, would not make a particle of difference to the West in the matter of furnishing it with business. With remunerative cargoes for westward-bound vessels, a single penny a bushel cheaper on freights, would effectually control the direction of shipments of cereals by the Canadian route. Commerce does not stop to inquire through whose territory goods pass; the only thing to be decided is, by what route they can be had in the shortest time and for the least money. Whether her vast products find their way to the ocean by the Georgian Bay, the Welland or the Erie Canal, makes not a particle of difference to the West. The matter of controlling interest to her is, how cheaply her products can be transported from her teeming prairies to the consumers upon the seaboard and upon the other side of the Atlantic, and hence that she may have Europe for her customer and get the best possible price for her surplus. If a New York merchant can only afford to pay her a dollar for a bushel of wheat, to be shipped to Europe by the Erie Canal, and

a Montreal dealer can afford to pay a dollar and ten cents to ship by the Georgian Bay route, the highest offer will take the wheat.

I beg leave to close by quoting a sentence which, years ago when comparing the New York and the Canadian routes, I used, and cannot now improve the sentiment. "It is true that national pride and immense capital and the beaten track of commerce are on the side of New York; but God and nature are stronger than all these; and let any intelligent man compare the 'Erie ditch' with the mighty St. Lawrence, and a canal to pass vessels of a thousand tons burthen from the Georgian Bay to Toronto, and he cannot doubt for a moment on which side the immutable laws of commerce will decide the contest."

Begging pardon of the Honorable Committee for my betrayal into any discussion of a topic not strictly embraced in their queries, offering, as my excuse for so doing, the deep interest I feel in the success of this great enterprise, so promotive of peace and commercial prosperity between England and America, I am, gentlemen,

Very truly, and most respectfully,

Your Obedient Servant,

WM. BROSS.