

should be attended with most extensive and complicated calculations. A practicable route was first to be ascertained, then, if there was a choice, the best and cheapest; and that which would promote the greatest number of inhabitants was to be chosen. It was easy to foresee that the most practicable route might strike the tide water below; and, accordingly, the best and cheapest might strike it still lower. To the great objects of the work it was perfectly immaterial at what precise point it should strike the tide water, provided that it should strike it somewhere within the District of Columbia. In a case like this, demanding such minute and accurate surveys, such a personal, laborious, and careful examination of the ground, such an intimate knowledge of the whole details connected with the entire route of the canal, and this with the aid of skillful and practical engineers, it seems to me most unreasonable to suppose that a Legislature, passing a law like this, should, without any adequate motive, peremptorily direct that the canal should begin at the head of tide water, and no where else. For, suppose that it should be ascertained that the only practicable route would commence the canal one, two, three, or more miles below the head of tide water; it is conceivable that the Legislature would recall the charter, or direct the work (such a work as this) to be abandoned, because it had been found impracticable to strike the head of tide water, an object so generally immaterial to the great purposes of the project? Is it not equally irrational to suppose that a Legislature, necessarily ignorant of all the details on which the selection of the best point of beginning depended, should nevertheless proceed to select that beginning, and leave the company to overcome, as they could, the insurmountable difficulties that might be thrown upon them from such a choice? Is it not far more rational to suppose that the Legislature, so circumstanced, and with a great object like this in view, would content themselves with a determination in general terms of the great termini of the canal, and leave to the company, who possessed, every advantage for the purpose, the selection of the particular point at which the canal should set out?

It seems to me, is what they have done. The upper terminus is the highest point of steamboat navigation on the Ohio, or any of its tributary streams; the lower terminus is the tide water of the Potomac in the District of Columbia, that is, in the whole District. The intermediate route is committed to the judgment of the company. And