

Hon. Mr. MACPHERSON—There are eight portages exclusive of Fort Francis. The hon. Secretary of State himself, has stated in this House, that there are only two or three very short portages, and there would be great advantage in improving them, as they would be used for some years to Rat Portage before the section of 180 miles of railway between Lac des Mille Lacs, and Rat Portage would be constructed.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—That is my opinion still. Eight portages I think is the correct number.

Hon. Mr. MACPHERSON—The number of portages is not material; the fall of 400 feet is what is material. If by reducing the number of portages you could diminish the number of feet of fall, then importance would attach to the number of portages, but as a matter of fact the number is eight. If the hon. Secretary of State was correct in stating, that the number was only two or three and the difference in level only was retained it would not have been of the slightest consequence, because it is the difference in level that is the difference. I think the House will agree with me that there is enough to call for an enquiry. This little plan which I have here, shows the route that was projected by Mr. Dawson from Thunder Bay to the Narrows of Lake of the Woods. It went by Sturgeon Falls. The hon. Secretary of State will probably tell me that the route between Sturgeon Falls and Lake of the Woods is not practicable. It has never been surveyed, yet the route contemplated by the present Government was from Thunder Bay to Sturgeon Falls, and thence utilize the water stretch to Rat Portage, two hundred miles of navigation.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. MACPHERSON—The hon. gentleman says "hear, hear;" I hope he will be able to show us how the country will get the benefit of it now, for unless he can show us that the difference of level does not exist, or that by some convulsion of nature since this survey was made, Lac des Mille Lacs and Rainy Lake have been brought to the same level, I cannot see how the route from Port Savanne is to be benefitted by what I have stated. The only other report that I shall refer to, is

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that of Mr. Mortimer, the engineer who was employed to make a sort of exploratory survey between the Red River and Lake Superior. It is Appendix B, of Mr. Fleming's report for 1877, and is dated "Canadian Pacific Railway Office, January 1875." The date must be an error; it must have been 1876, because he seems to have made the survey in 1875. He describes the country as exceedingly rough. Speaking of the Long Sault and Manitou Rapids, between Lake of the Woods and Fort Francis, both of which have to be improved before any steamer can ascend to Fort Francis, he says:—

"The Manitou Rapids are the next impediment; they are short, falling suddenly. Unfortunately, the better channel lies on the American side, but a good one may be had on the Canadian shore by excavating 300 lineal feet of rock; this excavation in some parts may reach five feet.

"It is very desirable these works should be thoroughly complete, as this is the keystone to the uninterrupted navigation from the North West Angle to Fort Francis, a distance of 130 miles; it can be obtained, however, only by a considerable expenditure. I estimate the fall of Manitou Rapids at about six feet."

These rapids are below Fort Francis, between Fort Francis and Lake of the Woods. Another point worthy of consideration is that this expenditure is made upon a river which belongs equally to the United States and ourselves and it is undoubtedly true that if the lock be of service to anyone it will be to the Americans. Mr. Mortimer describes each of the portages, including Fort Francis. Of Fort Francis portage, he says:—

"Respecting Fort Francis, either of two plans may be adopted, the one, tramway the other, a system of locks. It will depend upon the amount of freight and passengers expected to be carried through which ought to be used. I think the lake facilities at the Shebandowan end, even when improved, would hardly justify the expense of putting in locks. Should the traffic hereafter increase to such an extent as to make it an object to use locks, I believe it would pay, inasmuch as it would allow the steamer, plying on the Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods, to have uninterrupted navigation from the North West Angle to Kettle Falls, a distance of 175 miles; this will depend on the amount of improvement on the east-end."

This was written on the 28th of January 1876, and shows that Mr. Mortimer did not consider the plan settled, and his report was in possession of the Department of Public Works anterior to the date at which the works on the canal were resumed.