

“The distance between Lake Superior and  
 “Winnipeg was about 408 miles all-rail route.  
 “Of this distance 228 miles were now under  
 “contract. The first portion of the line from  
 “Fort William west to Lac des Mille Lacs, it  
 “was believed from the information before the  
 “Government, would be completed before the  
 “end of the present year. The distance from  
 “Lac des Mille Lacs to Rainy Lake was not  
 “very great, and there were only two or three  
 “very short portages on that route. From  
 “Rainy Lake to Lake of the Woods, a couple of  
 “hundred miles. \* \* \* Then they had water  
 “and rail communication already described, east  
 “to Thunder Bay. There was a gap from Rat  
 “Portage to the westerly end of the contract  
 “leading from Fort William, of 180 miles, which  
 “was not under contract. That section would  
 “cost a very considerable amount of money,  
 “and the impression seemed to be that it would  
 “be desirable to provide this water way in  
 “order to save, at all events for some years,  
 “the expense of constructing this 180 miles of  
 “railway, the cost of which was estimated at  
 “\$30,000 to \$40,000 per mile. The railways  
 “now being constructed would, of course, be  
 “available when the 180 miles link was con-  
 “structed. He would put it to the sense of the  
 “House, whether it would not be better to  
 “utilize those water stretches for some years,  
 “even at an expense of \$200,000 or \$300,000,  
 “than to incur the expenditure of six millions  
 “of dollars, and the postponement of commu-  
 “nication until this 180 miles of road were  
 “built. Although the Government had decided  
 “upon adopting an all-rail route they did not  
 “intend to put the whole line under contract  
 “at once.”

I quite agree with the hon. the Secretary of State that, if what he described could have been done for the amount named, it would have been a very wise and prudent expenditure, but I am afraid it could not have been accomplished for anything like that sum. I have here a map of that country which, I think, will tend to make the matter more plain to the House. It shows the located line of the railway, approximately, from Thunder Bay, on Lake Superior, to Selkirk, on the Red River. It shows Lac des Mille Lacs and the water stretches between it and Rainy Lake. It also shows Fort Francis and Rainy River on through Lake of the Woods to Rat Portage. I have already stated that the difference of level between Lac des Mille Lacs and Rainy Lake is 400 feet. The difference between Lac des Mille Lacs and Lake of the Woods is 430 feet. The Premier, in the extract which I read to-day from a speech of his, said the most formidable obstacle between Lac des Mille Lacs and Lake of the Woods was at Fort Francis. There would be, he said, a few short portages

*Hon. Mr. Macpherson.*

between Lac des Mille Lacs and Rainy Lake, which would be easily overcome so that the country might hope in a short time to have communication open for steamers between Lake of the Woods and Lac des Mille Lacs. Hon. gentlemen, I think it will be a serious undertaking for this country to ascend and descend the 400 feet from Lac des Mille Lacs to Rainy Lake. The Minister of Public Works stated that the only really formidable obstacle was at Fort Francis, at which place the fall to be overcome is only 23 feet. But the reports of Mr. Dawson, from which I have had this map prepared, show that instead of the fall of 23 feet at Fort Francis being the most formidable obstacle, it is almost the least formidable. At Brule Portage, the fall is 46 feet; at French Portage, 100 feet; at Pine and Deux Rivieres Portages, 124 feet; at Windgoostegoon, 9 feet; at Island Portage, 42 feet; at Nemeukan Portage, 72 feet; and one at Bare Portage of 9 feet, making altogether about 400 feet. Now, hon. gentlemen, is it not our duty to enquire, when such facts as these are recorded in official documents which were submitted to the House (Mr. Dawson's report of 1868, and Mr. Mortimer's report) how it was possible, with all this information within the reach of the Government—in-formation that you would naturally suppose they would have looked at—that they could have fallen into the error of supposing that a communication for steamers could have been established easily or at all between Rainy Lake and Lac des Mille Lacs, overcoming an ascent of upwards of 400 feet—a greater ascent than is overcome on the Welland Canal from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—There never was any such intention.

Hon. Mr. MACPHERSON—That is the statement of the Minister of Public Works.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—That must have been a misprint; it must have been an inadvertence.

Hon. Mr. MACPHERSON—The Prime Minister, and the hon. Secretary of State himself, have stated frequently that this communication could be easily established.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—We have stated that there are six portages in that distance.