

pretation of it. He also points out to the valuator that no improvements made on any lands after January, 1875, should be paid for, and, I am sure, this House and the country will be curious to know what reasons, what pressure prevented the Premier from acting up to his written and repeated instructions. The Premier, when he named the valuator and gave them their instructions, and appointed Brown as agent for the Government, did not know that Oliver, Davidson & Brown owned the land. Brown is supposed to have an interest in protecting the Government, but it will be admitted his own interests are stronger; hence he advises the valuator. Mr. Mackenzie tells him, August 2nd, that that advice is "repugnant to the law and contrary to the interests of his employers," the Government. Nevertheless, Brown's advice prevails, and he pays the enormous sum of \$67,000, mostly to self and partners, for lands which, apart from the railway, had really little if any value. The most flagrant violation of all the proprieties was the Neebing Hotel. The instructions to the valuator were to allow for no improvements made on any of the lots after the plan was fyled, January, 1875. Brown assures the Premier, in his letter of August 5th, 1876, that the valuator is abiding by this. Now, the plan taking possession of the land was fyled January, 1875; in the following August, Oliver, Davidson & Brown, and one or two others formed the Neebing Hotel Company, and proceed with the erection of that huge shanty directly on the line of railway, and opposite the wharf and within fifty feet of the bank, in such a position that it was impossible to extend the track, or make necessary sidings, without passing through the building. The valuator is informed by Brown that the Government will pay for this structure and he (Brown) the agent of the Government, and one of the owners of the building, makes up an account of what he tells them is the cost of the structure, and all materials on the ground; but more than double what others on evidence valued it at. This is forwarded to the Government—the Government that had instructed the valuator, and declared that nothing placed on the lands after January, 1875, should be paid for; and, strange to say, is paid for. It is un-

*Hon. Mr. McLelan.*

fair to gentlemen to detain them by further comment on this incomprehensible transaction at this late hour. A matter that has occupied considerable of our attention this Session, the Fort Francis Lock, has provided for it in the Bill before us, \$60,000. This is one of the, to use the mildest possible term, many expensive blunders into which the Government have fallen. It was never recommended by any engineer, and no man who values his reputation will say a word in its behalf. Even if necessary, there was no necessity for starting the work until the two sections of railway were under contract, and well advanced, as it is work less difficult or requiring less time to complete than 200 miles of railway, and without the railway, under any circumstances, it was useless. But when it was decided that the road should be moved north of Sturgeon Falls, and eight or nine additional portages brought into the "water-stretch route," then it was madness to go on and absolutely throw away \$200,000. The plea set up is that sixty or seventy thousand had been expended, but it would have been more honest to have acknowledged the error and borne this loss than to go on and add \$200,000 more, and pretend that it can ever be of any practical value. Mr. Marcus Smith, acting Engineer-in-Chief, in his evidence before the Committee, says that he never recommended or proposed the construction of such a work, and the House will remember that Mr. Fleming last year stated that he had never been consulted, nor had he ever advised its construction. The Government will not, therefore, I think, venture to shelter themselves, as is their fashion, behind the recommendation of an engineer. Nor can they bring an engineer of any standing to certify to its value. Mr. Smith, in his evidence, is asked this question:—

"For the purposes of commerce, will this lock (Fort Francis) be of any use whatever in connection with the Pacific Railway?"

"Answer—Not in connection with the railway."

Again, the moment the railway is completed it is of no use at all, and this answer is in substance repeated to several other questions. Other witnesses familiar with the transportation of goods to Manitoba, confirm this. Indeed, all we require