

might happen to be in the House that the hon. gentleman's predecessor and the late Government were sadly remiss in prosecuting this public enterprise. In the first place, I never believed, nor did a majority of the members of the House believe, in the excessive bargain made with British Columbia, which bound the Government of the Dominion to an extraordinary and extravagant expenditure. Nay more, we know that before we took office in November, 1873, a protest of complaint was lodged by British Columbia against the Canadian Government for non-fulfillment of the terms of Union. I confess now, as I have always done, that I felt it to be my duty as a member of the late Administration, and in that my colleagues all agreed with me, to endeavor if possible to supplement the bargain, without intending on any account to do so at the expense of any vast increase in the country's taxation. When we came into office we found that the previous Government had expended \$1,391,000 in exploratory surveys. I might very easily say they had expended \$1,500,000, and not one foot of road was located. I do not do that, for I scorn to take any undue advantage of an opponent in debate. I think it was absolutely essential in the interests of the road itself that a thorough survey of the country should be made. The hon. gentleman who filled the office of Minister of Public Works during that period, no doubt acted, in directing the surveys, so that he would obtain a general knowledge of the principal features of the country in order that by studying its topography he might be able to advise the Government of the proper course to be pursued in selecting a route. After I acceded to office it became a very large portion of my duties to consider what should be done. I had, on previous occasions, when not saddled with any responsibility as a member of the Government, taken the ground that the first thing to be done was to get full possession of the North-West country, to throw in a large population there, which would be the nucleus of settlement and enterprise in the centre of the continent, and towards the adoption of that policy all our efforts were directed. We felt it absolutely essential that we should open the prairie region as soon as possible, and our whole course, whether wise or unwise in the estimation of hon. gentlemen opposite, was governed by that one consideration. At the time we assumed office it was practically next to impossible for any immigrants to reach the prairie country. It required a journey of some eighteen or twenty days in the carts of the country to travel from St. Paul to Winnipeg. And I remember very well some people coming here, during the first year of my incumbency in office, who had been nineteen days upon that journey going out of the country. To send in immigrants, therefore, under such circumstances seemed to be utterly absurd, and the first matter to which we directed our attention, therefore, was to obtain a highway into the country by the best possible route. It is not interesting to know, as this House possibly does not know, or as many members of it do not, that one member of the present Administration denounced us in the most unmeasured terms, because we attempted to make a line from the boundary northward, and for extravagance in building the road between Thunder Bay and Red River. The hon. Minister of Railways seemed to forget all this. He is possessed of a weakness of memory that is simply marvellous where it affects any of his particular friends, but his memory is exceedingly good in matters affecting prejudicially, in his opinion, any of his opponents. Indeed, Sir, I am not sure but that the hon. gentleman himself said something adverse to us in regard to the building of the line from Pembina. I put myself in communication with the people acting for the Dutch bondholders of the road from St. Vincent to St. Paul. Owing to financial difficulties some time before our acceptance of office, I felt the first thing to be done was to build a road to our country, and

I held out to them the hope that we would be able to meet them at the boundary, as by that time they could construct the road on their side of the line. For some time that effort was unsuccessful. In the meantime we thought it advisable to proceed with the grading of the road, and it was graded some time before an arrangement was made with Mr. George Stephen, who had, in the meantime, become proprietor of the road on the United States side of the line. Even that was objected to by hon. gentlemen opposite, for though the Bill I introduced in 1878 in the House of Commons passed there, it was defeated in the Upper House, or, at least it was so mutilated as to make it impossible for us to accept it, and that arrangement fell through. Another arrangement was made, however, by the same parties for the operating of the road, so that before we left office the road was ready for carrying freight and passengers into the country as far as Winnipeg. In taking a rapid review of matters connected with the road, I shall endeavor to avoid anything to which the hon. the Minister of Railways can take exception. It is not my intention to discuss the matters which were so ably discussed by my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition last night, but to confine myself to the survey and selection of the route and to matters cognate thereto. I recollect very well, Sir, the torrent of abuse poured out upon myself because I had selected Fort William as the terminus, on Thunder Bay generally. I was not particular as to Fort William. Whatever place the engineers selected as the best terminus at Thunder Bay, I was willing to accept. But Thunder Bay I fixed upon in my mind as the most desirable place at which to have the terminus in preference to Nipigon. The Government, of which I was a member, decided not to build the eastern portion, between that port and Lake Nipissing, for some time, the object being, as I have already said, to have the line built as soon as possible into the prairie country from the nearest point at which navigation could be reached from the side of the country to be traversed. Still, Sir, I might say that in one sense I had no responsibility for the adoption of the Fort William or Thunder Bay terminus, because before I came into office at all my predecessor in the office of Public Works (Sir Hector Langevin) had despatched a large party of surveyors to survey the line from the mouth of the Kaministiquia westward, and it was many months before I could communicate with those parties as the winter had closed in. It was upon those surveys ordered by hon. gentlemen opposite that our ultimate selection of the route depended. I recollect also that we had obtained such surveys as satisfied the Chief Engineer that we could fairly let the work, and upon that report we proceeded as soon as possible to do so. The Chief Engineer's idea, as developed in a memorandum which was published at the time and distributed among members of the House, was that it was desirable to obtain very accurate knowledge of the country during two or three years explorations, but as soon as any particular route was fairly settled upon, to commence to clear the track, build telegraph lines, and otherwise make preparations for the general work of construction which was to follow immediately afterwards. This policy we adopted and went on with. We had to give out the contract for building a telegraph line upon the route as it should be located. This was done to the best of our knowledge and ability. I am not, at present, about to discuss the questions brought up by the report of the Commission lately presented to Parliament. They will come up in the discussion of that report. I am merely stating facts in connection with the road. We had some reason to believe, chiefly from the writings and observations of the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Dawson), that it would be possible to obtain a straight line from Fort William, by way of Sturgeon Falls, to certain islands said to exist in the Lake of the Woods, but which had in the meantime disappeared from view, and