

of Winnipeg, reported very strongly against the site which the hon. gentleman has selected. I also stated that the Government had paid \$75 per foot frontage for the lot, when, as a matter of fact, it was not worth more than \$20 or \$25 per foot. The statement the Minister then made was that that was paid on the recommendation of the inspector. Now, I do not find that the inspector has made any recommendation. I find that the Government got the town assessor's valuation of this land, which was \$45 or \$50 a foot, and this in my opinion is fully double what the land is worth. But even taking it as a correct valuation, the Government deliberately paid \$75 a foot, or \$25 a foot more than the highest valuation they were able to obtain. They have on file and have returned to the House certain recommendations which may be used, perhaps, as an argument in favour of buying this land at the price stated; but these recommendations are entirely from individuals who own lands close to this, and whose interest was in getting the post office located there in order to enhance the value of their lands. The town council passed a resolution, which was communicated to the Government, to this effect:

That it is the opinion of the Council that the location of the contemplated new post office for the town of Portage la Prairie should be on the corner of Tupper Street and Saskatchewan Avenue, or the corner of Campbell Street and Saskatchewan Avenue.

Now, the Government were offered a site at each of these points at \$75 a foot, the same price they paid for the lot actually selected. Both of these lots are among the best business properties in the town, though not as valuable as property on the north side of the street; but instead of acting on the recommendation of the town council, the Government took the lot at the corner of Annie Street and paid this exorbitant price. The Minister of Public Works adopted the very proper course under the circumstances of directing his officer in Winnipeg, Mr. Daniel Smith, to go to Portage la Prairie and make a report on the desirability of the different locations available for a post office. Mr. Smith made the following report:—

Winnipeg, August, 1894.

Sir.—In accordance with your instructions, I visited Portage la Prairie re reporting on a post office site in that town. I could not procure a map of the town showing the lots and streets as now laid out. I therefore made a map showing the business portion of the town. I also show the east and west boundaries of the business portion of the town. Principally all the business houses are on Saskatchewan Avenue, and located between Manitoba and Annie Street on the north side of Saskatchewan Avenue.

This post office is not located between those points, but it is west of the district which Mr. Smith reports as being the business part of the town—

There are four business houses west of the location shown on the map as business limit.

Mr. MARTIN.

The available sites for the post office I have marked in red and numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. No. 1, 99 or 66 feet frontage, is available at \$75 per foot. This property is owned by a Mr. Campbell, of Toronto, who, I understand, has been trying to sell it to the Government for a post office site. His agent stated he thought that he would most probably take what the other properties were offered for. He only owns 50 feet. I have another offer of the other 16 feet for \$80 per foot. No. 4 is the property of the Presbyterian Church. The trustees offer the property either 66 feet or 99 feet frontage, for \$80 per foot frontage, they to have the privilege of removing the buildings, which are of wood, without foundations of stone. With reference to the sites the maps show their location. The western site have the best sites for foundation, and are somewhat drier soil. There is no drainage, and the nature of the ground is wet below about 3 feet from the surface. I would, therefore, suggest that the building be well raised above the surface. The ground is level on all the sites. There are no available lots on the north side of the avenue, except inner lots, and they are held at fancy prices. The town hall is supposed to be about the centre of the town.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) D. SMITH.

Now, the solid business portion of the town lies between Annie Street and Manitoba Street, just as Mr. Smith reported. Then Mr. Smith was asked further to investigate the properties, and he made a report on the 23rd October, 1894, as follows:—

Dear Sir,—In accordance with your instructions by telegram, I came here to ascertain the price of land in the vicinity of the site offered for post office buildings. I find the Imperial Bank purchased a piece of land adjoining the bank property, the price was \$75, not a corner lot, and east of the church property I offered for post office site. One other sale was made further east at the same figure, also inside lot. Properties Nos. 4, No. 3 and No. 2 on the map I forwarded to the department, I consider worth the prices asked. No. 1 being west of all business houses on the south side of the street is not worth as much.

Of those three sites, two were admirable sites, and the other was a reasonably fair site, and all available to the Government. No. 1, being west of all business houses on the south side of the street, is not worth as much. That is the site the Government selected. The inspector does not attempt to put a value upon it, but simply says it is not worth as much, and points out that it is entirely west of all the business houses on that side of the street. There is another letter from Mr. Smith, dated Winnipeg, 26th October, 1894, to A. Gobeil, Esq., Deputy Minister of Public Works:

I inclose you a letter from Mr. W. Sparling, re value of lands at Portage la Prairie. Mr. Sparling is the town assessor, and has a good idea of the value of lands in the town. I, therefore, thought well to get a valuation from him. I have marked the lots he refers to, No. 1, 2, 3 and 4 as shown on the plan I mailed Mr. Fuller, showing the available sites for the post office building at Portage la Prairie.