

set that, had Messrs. Oliver, Davidson & Co. an interest in any of those lands, it is extremely probable nothing would ever have been said about the value paid for them. Mr. Oliver especially was known as a prominent member of the Reform party, and having a shrewd suspicion of how similar matters were managed under the old King, Sir John, these scandalmongers thought that possibly the Minister played into his hands in order to give him an advantage. It is needless to say that not a tittle of proof of this was forthcoming, but much evidence to show that every matter connected with the expropriation of the land, as well as the selection of the site, was conducted with absolute and unimpeachable honesty and fairness. The Government were not responsible for the actions of Oliver, Davidson & Co.; the members of the firm are wealthy and speculative, and to make themselves sure of reaping a benefit from the terminus they purchased largely at Saint-Ste. Marie, Nepigon, and Prince Arthur's Landing, as well as on the Kaministiquia. They were determined to strike the terminus, wherever it might be, and between all those points they were pretty safe to do it. This, really, is all that ought to be necessary in explaining the Government's connection with Oliver, Davidson & Co. For anything with which Mr. Mackenzie is concerned, the firm might just as well have been Brown, Jones & Robinson. The Government cannot stop private speculation, and unless these gentlemen had been prohibited from purchasing land at Nepigon, Prince Arthur's Landing, and Fort William, it was quite impossible that the Government could escape dealing with them when the necessary expropriations for the terminus came to be made.

In answering this last question, the evidence as in the case of the other two, will be allowed to speak for itself. It will be well, however, to understand exactly the course pursued in making the valuations, although, of course, it was the same as in all cases of a similar nature. The law provides for it—provides for the appointment of valuers, and lays down rules to govern them. Nothing was done in connection with this matter that was not usual in all others like it. Here is Mr. Mackenzie's simple statement, made under oath, as to the appointment of the valuers:—I wrote to Mr. Pardee,

Commissioner of Crown Lands for Ontario, stating that we had to obtain the services of a Provincial land surveyor to work out afresh many of the boundaries in the townships and in the town plot through which the railway was to run, and that it would be necessary for us to get a petition from the residents under the Surveyors' Act to make such fresh definition of the boundary legal; and I wished at the same time to use such surveyor as valuator. Not knowing any suitable person myself, I said I would be glad if he would name some person to me who was acquainted with that country, and had done work there for the Department—a man in whom we could have confidence. He recommended Mr. Wilson, of whom I knew nothing, never having met him to my knowledge; but we accepted his recommendation. I then telegraphed to Robert Reid, of London, to ask him if he would accept the position of valuator with Mr. Wilson, which he agreed to do.

Mr. Wilson was and is a Conservative; Mr. Reid is a Reformer. Of their qualifications for the duty imposed upon them not a single doubt has ever been expressed. They entered upon their work with the simple object of performing their duty, and they did it impartially. The first thing to do was to determine the basis on which values should be placed on the lands. For a year or two previously parties had been active in speculation in anticipation of the terminus being fixed at Fort William. Lots had changed hands at good figures, and, to show that the transactions were in good faith, many of the lots had been improved and built upon. They had a regular marketable value at the time, and the valuers had no option but to pay that value. The basis mutually agreed upon was the prevailing price in 1875, the time the terminus was fixed; any other would have been manifestly unfair. As far back as 1872 or 1873, according to Mr. Wilson's evidence, half-acre lots in the town plot were held at forty and fifty dollars each. In 1875 Mr. John McKellar, down the river from the plot, was asking two hundred and fifty dollars for lots along the front street running on top of the bank of the river. They were asking two hundred and fifty dollars for fifty feet frontage. Mr. Wilson also testified that the Prince Arthur Landing Railway Company paid considerably more for their right of way