

“The Government simply proposed while the road was being constructed to utilize a large portion of the water communication available for the passage of boats; as for instance where the road touched, as it would according to the survey now nearly completed, the north-east angle of Lac des Mille Lacs, they would have continued navigation, with some portages doubtless, to the north-west end of the Lake of the Woods; and until the line was finished between the Lac des Mille Lacs and the west side of Winnipeg River, they could use this navigation as long as it was required. If they found it impossible from the circumstances of the country to continue the building of the road between these two points for some years to come, they would have some 64 miles of railway from Lake Superior to the north-east corner of the Lac des Mille Lacs, similar communication being opened between Red River and Rat Portage from the western extremity, so that they would be enabled to bring the two ends of the Province within comparatively short distances of each other. He did not expect that it would be possible for the Government—even though Parliament could furnish the money required—to construct the intermediate portion within less than four or five years, and it was very important indeed that they should avail themselves of almost continued water navigation between two and three hundred miles during that period.”

By that time the Government had, apparently, abandoned the route between Shebandowan and Sturgeon Falls. From Sturgeon Falls, on an arm of Rainy Lake, when the improvements at Fort Francis and at the shoals above and below it had been completed, there would have been water communication for upwards of two hundred miles to Rat Portage. But in March, 1876, that route had been abandoned, and the northern location of the railway had been adopted, carrying it north of Lac des Mille Lacs, and so on by what we understand to be the present location. That, I believe, rendered it impossible to use these water stretches, because Lac des Mille Lacs is 400 feet above the level of Rainy Lake, and above the level of Fort Francis Lock. On the 31st of March, 1876, the Pacific Railway was the subject of debate in another place. On that occasion the Prime Minister said:—

“The line we have adopted now from Fort William will ascend the Kaministiquia Valley for about 20 miles, in round numbers. Then diverging somewhat sharply to the right, and touching the north-east corner of Lac des Mille Lacs.”

This confirms what I have already explained that the route by Shebandowan and Sturgeon Falls had then been aban-

doned and the northern route had been adopted, rendering it impossible, I believe, to make any use whatever of the water stretches as a connecting link between the eastern end of the Red River section and the western end of the Lake Superior section of the railway. The Premier further stated:—

“The thirteenth contract was to build 45 miles towards Lake Shebandowan, it being supposed that this would be the shortest route westward; but the explorations made show that it would have to wend northward, and we decided to stop short of it about 15 miles. From that point westward the road, passing by Lac des Mille Lacs, would become the subject of a new contract.”

The speech from which I have just read extracts was delivered on the 31st of March, 1876. Parliament was prorogued on the 12th of April. At this time, I would remind the House that the work at Fort Francis had been suspended under instructions from the Minister of Public Works, from the 19th November, 1875, but a week after the prorogation of Parliament the works were ordered to be resumed. Now, I think that is a point on which we require some information. There was nothing said in the House of Commons that I can find on the subject of the Fort Francis Lock, or proceeding with its construction that year. The works were suspended while Parliament was sitting, and remained suspended until after the prorogation. On the 18th of April instructions were given by the Secretary of the Public Works Department to Mr. Sutherland to resume work. I think the country ought to know why the works were resumed then. If I am at all correct, it must have been well known to every gentleman connected with the Public Works, that it would be utterly impossible to use this lock in connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway, and if that is the fact why was the work resumed and proceeded with? It may be that the Government will be able to show that the lock will be of public service irrespective of the Canadian Pacific Railway. I confess I do not think this can beshown, but it is a matter for enquiry. It strikes me as being rather remarkable that the work should have remained suspended from November to April without anything being said about it so far as I can discover, and then that instructions should