

tions in respect to it from the late Administration, and therefore are not responsible. The country will not accept that explanation. The only thing they inherited from the late Government, was the treaty with British Columbia to build the railway across the continent. That treaty they tore up and left themselves free to deal with the whole question in the way that in their judgment was best for the country. And what have they done? As soon as they succeeded to office they entered energetically upon the construction of the Pembina Branch of the Pacific Railway. They constructed the road bed, built the culverts, got it ready for the track, sent up the steel rails at an enormous freight—fifteen dollars per ton from Duluth to Manitoba—and when all this was done they suddenly stopped and changed their policy. They said the American line would not be built to the boundary, and there was no use in finishing the Canadian one. Now, if the American line was not to be finished, why did not the Government know it before they commenced work on the Pembina Branch? But if they had finished that work, I am satisfied the American part would have been completed to the line before our part would have been open six months. I have no doubt whatever upon that point: but there was a very powerful interest opposed to the construction of that branch—the transportation interest on the Red River. Its influence is very great, and I do not hesitate to say that it may have been felt even by the Government of the country, and that the road has remained incomplete for three years or more to the great inconvenience, disadvantage and loss of the people of Manitoba, and all those going there, largely in consequence of the opposition of that powerful influence. The road was made, the rails were beside it, and yet for the last three years the road has remained in that unfinished condition. How much would it have cost to lay the track? Very little, and if they had but run a train a day, up one day and down the next, it would have cost but a trifle, while it would have served to show, at all events, we had done all in our power to get railway communication with Manitoba. Now, without any special movement on the part of the American company so far as I know, the Government announces its intention of completing the

*Hon. Mr. Macpherson.*

railway. I may be uncharitable, but I cannot help thinking if the general election was not to come off before next year, there would be no movement in the Pembina branch this year. The hon. Minister of Agriculture and one of his colleagues visited Manitoba last year at the time when the hon. Senator from Kingston and myself were there, and they must have learned that unless something was done the Government could not expect a supporter from that Province at the next general election. I cannot help thinking that the movement on that line now is an electioneering one, just as in the case of the Georgian Bay Branch at the last general election, and we may have that enterprise up again as an electioneering card for the coming election. My hon. friend from Toronto—Mr. Aikins—and myself do not agree, as has been observed by the hon. Senator from Montreal, as to the best means of extending communication to the North-West. He thinks the best plan is to build an all-rail line. I think that is beyond the means of the country, and I think, furthermore, it is unnecessary, and will be unnecessary for many years to come. Probably we are now committed to it irrevocably. My hon. friend said yesterday that we constructed the Welland Canal and other canals for the purpose of securing the great trade of the West. That is very true, but it must be remembered that that trade is supposed to pay our shipping and to bring a handsome return to the country. If the trade with the North-West was sufficient to be profitable, I would not object to the building of a line of railway to transport it. If it would pay I would hold up both hands for our having an all-rail route to connect that country with this. But what are the facts? The tide of immigration to Manitoba, and to this Continent generally, has been checked, and is not likely to recover from that check for a long time to come. In the North-West the population is small, and increasing slowly. The whole surplus of the Province last year was from two to three hundred thousand bushels of wheat. Say there was an equal amount of other products—and that is a large estimate—what freight would that afford to a railway? It would not load more than a few trains. It amounts to nothing. My own opinion is that the im-