

country at as cheap a rate as it can be carried by our present transportation facilities. I am quite sure that hon. members on both sides will endorse the opinion of Sir William Van Horne. He was the gentleman who was first named for the chairmanship of the Transportation Commission, to inquire into and investigate the whole question. If any further evidence were necessary, I could give you the name of another gentleman extensively engaged in the grain and flour business, Mr. Meighen, president of the Lake of the Woods Milling Company. He must have immense bills of freight to pay; he is freighting wheat and flour over the railways and the lake routes continuously during the whole year. I doubt whether there is any milling company in Canada which handles more of the prairie wheat than the Lake of the Woods Milling Company. Mr. Meighen is a practical business man, who has been engaged in the business many years, and whose opinion is consequently well worthy of consideration. He says it will be impossible to carry the product of the west to the Atlantic sea-board by an all-rail route as cheaply as they are at present carried by rail and water routes. Last year there were 15,000,000 bushels of grain handled at Midland, and a similar quantity at Depot Harbour. As my hon. friend from Cornwall and Stormont (Mr. Pringle) went into that question very fully, I shall not take up the time of the House by discussing it.

But I wish to point out that this country has expended some \$70,000,000 on our canal system. If the government intend to expend a sum estimated at \$100,000,000 and more for the purpose of establishing a competing route to carry the produce of that western country to the eastern markets or to the Atlantic seaboard, that would be a laudable undertaking, if the freight could be carried over that line at as cheap a rate as it is now being carried by rail and water. But when the best informed men on the transportation question all assure us that that is an impossibility, it certainly must strike any reasonable man as an absurd proposition for the government to go on and expend that amount of money. Instead of doing so, as the trade of that country increases, let the government take about ten per cent of that amount which they propose to invest in the construction of this new road and use it to increase our present transportation facilities by improving our canals, adding to our elevator capacity, and so on. By doing so, they will probably lessen the cost of freight and save a large amount of money to the people of the west. Wheat, I understand, has been carried this season from Fort William to Montreal by the canals for four cents per bushel. I do not know what the rate is all-rail from Fort William to Montreal, but I suppose it would be four times that. A million dollars or thereabouts has been expended in im-

proving transportation facilities at Port Colborne. I would advise the government to pause and consider this scheme and consider whether it would not be better to improve our water-ways and harbours, increase our elevator capacity and otherwise add to our facilities, and leave the construction of this road for the next generation to deal with.

Now, it is most desirable to open up and develop a new country. But, from the information I have, I am led to believe that the timber resources of the province of Quebec and Ontario are very limited, as also is the arable land, and these are the only sources from which the government could hope to recoup themselves for the immense expenditure involved in the scheme they have proposed. The prairie country is sufficiently developed by the railroads they have there now. I think that a mistake was made probably in settling up that prairie country. The people kept straying off into distant parts in search of better land than their predecessors had taken up, and thus settlement was made sparse, so that the taxes upon each settler for schools and other municipal purposes were made very heavy. If the people had been obliged to settle more thickly in certain sections it would have been a great advantage to the country. Who would think of acquiring lands for farming purposes in the province of Quebec or Ontario when there is to be found in Manitoba and the territories land which was decreed by Providence for agricultural purposes? I remember the first visit I paid to that western country. I went as far as Regina. Dropping off at one town for an hour or two, I secured a team and started out through the prairie country with some friends. I was lost in amazement at that immense area of prairie land ready for the plough. It struck me that we had come into this country at the wrong end. If we had come in at the west instead of at the east, and had left the provinces of Ontario and Quebec clothed with the timber that the pioneers of this country have chopped down, how much better it would have been? Men took up land in these eastern provinces and grew old and gray-headed chopping down and burning up timber to clean up the land, and when they were due to leave this world they had not cleaned up more than one hundred acres to get it into a state of cultivation into which a man can bring an equal amount of land in Manitoba or the Territories in the course of four or five years. The farmers of the county in which I was born and brought up cut, logged-up and burned timber, which if standing, would be worth three or four times as much money as the farms with all the improvements on them. We have destroyed our natural resources of timber which would have supplied that prairie country for generations to come, and we have land in Manitoba and the Territories