

where the Fort Francis Lock is being built, which prevented the passage of boats to Lake of the Woods. Having overcome this impediment and minor obstructions in Rainy River, communication would be uninterrupted to the North-West Angle or at Rat Portage, the point where the railway, which is being built eastward from Selkirk, intersects the Lake of the Woods. So it was quite apparent, looking at the map of the country, that the removal of the slight obstructions in Rainy River and the construction of a lock at Fort Francis, at the outlet of Rainy Lake, would give uninterrupted navigation from the east side of Rainy Lake to the North West Angle, a distance, I believe, of one hundred and sixty or one hundred and seventy miles—I am not sure of the exact distance. On the belief, no doubt, that the road would intersect the waters that flow into Rainy Lake near Sturgeon Falls, this work was commenced. In 1875 it was referred to in the report of the Minister of Public Works, and in that year a vote of the House was asked for, and the sum of \$150,000 was placed in the estimates. I mention this fact because my hon. friend asks in his motion what authority there was for this expenditure.

Hon. Mr. MACPHERSON—That is charged to the Pacific Railway.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—It is quite true it is under the head of Pacific Railway expenditure, but it is put down specifically for the Fort Francis Lock, and Parliament was advised of the character of the expenditure. At that time the belief was that it could have been availed of in facilitating the connection between the then proposed terminus of the Pacific Railway east of Rainy Lake, and the Lake of the Woods. The House will remember that, last year, at the instance of a member of the Committee who takes a deep interest in this subject, Mr. Sandford Fleming was brought before the Committee, and questioned as to why he changed the route of the railway after public opinion had centred upon the southern line. It is quite natural that the southern line, following to some extent the Dawson Road, would have been preferred, because it was in the line of what is known as the water stretches. It gave this 170 miles of water communication, and it was

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a great object in the building of the Pacific Railway that it could, on the east side, reach those waters, and thus, for a considerable period, have enabled us to defer the construction of an all-rail route through to Manitoba. Mr. Fleming, in his evidence, from which I shall quote, in reply to a question why the located line was selected in preference to one by Sturgeon Falls, said:—

“ We began by making surveys directly on that line from both ends; we spent a whole season and the following winter and part of the following year, but we failed to find a practicable line in the direction referred to, east of Rat Portage. We were driven to look for a line further to the north.”

He then proceeds to show the difficulty of finding a practicable line either by Sturgeon Falls or round by Rat Portage. Mr. Macpherson, puts the question directly to him:—

“ Had you the country between Sturgeon Falls and Lake of the Woods thoroughly surveyed and explored?”

To this Mr. Fleming replied:—

“ Yes, we went in from both ends and had explorations made, but the reports were so extremely unsatisfactory that we did not deem it advisable to make further surveys. Instrumental surveys were continued, but we were driven off the direct line altogether.”

“ Q. Did the explorations extend north and south over a considerable portion of the country?—Yes; they explored to the right and left over a considerable area.”

“ Q. You spoke of Rat Portage as being the only place where the Lake of the Woods could be crossed?—The question of crossing the Lake of the Woods at another point, by a number of islands, had been considered, but the expense would be very great indeed, and the policy of crossing these wide stretches of water is very questionable.”

The evidence is all in the same direction. The Hon. Mr. Sutherland puts the question.

“ Would not a line from Sturgeon Falls through the Narrows, to Winnipeg, be much shorter? Yes, if you could get a line.”

I put the question to him myself, whether the surveys had been at all of a character that might be called exhaustive, and he replied “yes.” I then asked him if he was prepared to say no feasible line could be found there, and he replied that engineers were unwilling to admit that anything was impracticable in engineering, because money could force a passage through almost any obstacle, but it was on that ground alone he would not say it was impossible. This was the year