

of the Province had been very much retarded. It was from the desire of such localities, in their own interest to protect themselves against other localities which had more favourable railway advantages, that this system of local railways was first called into existence. [Mr. Macdougall—hear, hear.]—and in no sense can any critic, who assumes to deal with this question of railway communication in the Province of Ontario, and to characterize this action of the Government as indiscreet or unwise, pretend to have any foundation whatever for such a statement. The true origin I have said, of local railways, has been mainly the action of existing railways themselves, especially in the matter of discriminating rates, by which they have almost crushed out the interests of one locality, while another with better railway facilities was making rapid strides of progress. Without going into details I may give the result of the Provincial action in granting aid to railways. Twenty-two railways have received grants of aid from the Ontario Legislature. Of that number, eleven have completed the total mileage aided, and received the Provincial grants. Just one half, therefore, have been finished to the full extent. Four have completed portions of their railways and received the grant for such portions. Six are now in course of construction, and only one has not yet made a commencement. Of these twenty-two railways, we find that ten were aided under Orders in Council, brought down by Mr. Blake in the session of 1872. Of these ten, seven have fully completed their works and received the Provincial grants, while two have received aid for the respective portions completed, and one only remains which has not yet entered upon construction. During the year 1876, we find that railway progress has still been continuing, and as Provincial Legislation provided only a very small proportion of the cost of completing this large number of miles of railway since Ontario became a separate Province, hon. members will, I am sure, feel that if there ever has been a wise policy of expenditure of public moneys it has been the railway policy which, upon an invitation so slight as not to demand more than \$3,000,000, resulted in the expenditure of ten times that amount, or more than \$33,000,000. I have in previous statements given information derived from the Engineer of the Public Works Department as to railway construction in the Province since 1867. A large portion represents mileage not receiving