

of my predecessor. They did not show there was a reduction in cost, whereas on those let before his time there was an increase in cost. There is one thing that will perhaps surprise many members. Up to this hour the hon. gentleman has not let a single contract, except upon tenders obtained by us, upon our surveys; for sections A, B, 41, 42, we had sent three distinct parties over the ground in order to get the figures more correctly. I had not the slightest conception until a very few minutes before the close of the Session of 1878 that the figures that were given upon 14 and other numbers, including 25, were so delusive. I accepted the estimate made by the engineer on the tender as approximately accurate, and we took the greater pains with the other sections which the hon. gentleman had the credit of letting, though not of surveying, in order to obtain as accurate information as possible. With regard to the selection of the line from Rat Portage westward, I see it is the conclusion of the Commissioners that there was a mistake made, not particularly with regard to the heavy work upon some portions of the road, not up or following on to Cross Lake, but notably the crossing of swamps of almost unknown depths that swallowed an immense amount of material. But Mr. Fleming, before the Commissioners, declares that he sees no reason even now to change the opinion he formed regarding that line. I may say frankly that if I had known the existence of those vast swamps, some further enquiry would have been made; but I was not aware of their existence. I accepted the statement of quantities given by the engineer as sufficient for the purpose of making estimates upon; and those estimates would, as a matter of course, depend upon the accuracy with which the surveyors had done their work. Upon section 14 it would not depend so much upon that as upon the examination of the ground which they were to traverse, whether the swampy peat which forms the soil for many miles in some places, and of a depth of eighteen or nineteen feet, sufficed to carry a road even with the aid of timber. All this had to be looked at afterwards when the road was pretty much constructed, and accounts for the extraordinary expenditure over the figures estimated by the engineers. With regard to the contract of which the hon. gentleman took so much credit last night, if any one is entitled to credit for obtaining those surveys, it is myself. I was not aware, as I have stated, that the others were deficient in accuracy; but it was perfectly clear to any one that that 185 miles which forms the connecting link should be examined as carefully as possible, both with regard to getting a shortened route and the smallest amount of work that could be obtained by re-surveys; and, as I have stated, three times parties were sent over that road for the purpose; and I gathered from the hon. gentleman last night that even after that, some changes were made which lessened the distance and increased the estimate of quantities. And I can only say that I am very glad it turned out so. I regret the hon. gentleman's want of generosity when he took the whole credit to himself, as he did in such a self-regarding air that was almost ludicrous to witness. The distinguished position he holds, to use his own words, should have induced him to be more moderate in applying praise to himself and censure to his opponents. He did not refer to another matter last night, but I have nothing to shun or keep back, and shall refer to it myself. I have been blamed by some hon. gentlemen opposite for steps taken to improve the navigation of the internal lakes between Fort William and Lake of the Woods. If I did wrong, I acted in the interests of the country, because I sought to obtain an easier way into the North-West for our people than could be obtained by the railway. Since 1871, parties have been out surveying that country, and we were told last night it would take another year to finish the road on these two sections. I take it for granted

Mr. MacKENZIE.

that no time was lost by the hon. gentlemen opposite before we acceded to office, and I am quite sure that none was lost by us while in office. The many works at the Fort Francis Locks and Rainy River were undertaken by us with the view that we would be able to send, as Mr. Dawson had done, over the Dawson route, some traffic through our own territory into the North-West before the railroad would be available. It was quite uncertain for a year or two after we reached office whether we would get a connection with the United States system of railways or not. It was quite certain in my estimation that six or eight years would elapse before it will be possible to finish that road entirely from Fort William to Selkirk, and at the same time, obtain the shortest possible line. Therefore, we determined, if possible, to obtain access to the country, to some extent, by using these navigable waters. I was taunted with advocating an amphibious system, part land and part water. I was quite indifferent whether it was land or water, so that we used it first, and used it best for the purpose of getting people into our country. That was our object, and if it was a crime, it was one closely allied to patriotism. I have always said, although it has been denied in some electioneering pamphlets issued during the last elections, that not one mile of road was built but what was in the precise direction required for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway as a whole. Of course, there is a difference of opinion between reaching the Red River at Selkirk and at Winnipeg. Personally, I would rather have reached it at Winnipeg. I would rather have gone by the south, where the country was probably more open, and probably more accessible at the time for settlement; but our object being to obtain the shortest possible route across the continent, and the line that would serve the largest extent of country, we deliberately chose the line we did, from Rat Portage across to Selkirk, offering immediate opportunity for the navigation of Lake Winnipeg. We did not know very much about the country, except what information we got from two or three parties that had gone from Hudson's Bay to Winnipeg, or from Lake Winnipeg to Hudson's Bay; but we do know that there is a very large extent of valuable land, and merchantable timber around that lake, so that we could obtain ties and other timber for all purposes in almost unlimited quantities; and we could not, viewing the public interest as we did, neglect the interests represented by those quantities of timber and other materials available for building, and for shipbuilding, and other industries of that kind. Where the road now crosses, if it should be continued from Selkirk, and no crossing afforded there—if it should, in other words, be taken in a straight line from some point eastward from Winnipeg, we shall not be able to obtain the navigation of the river without immense cost. We knew that the rapids between Winnipeg and Selkirk at low water afforded only two feet of water and it was with great difficulty some of our rails could be taken down and others had to be kept over until the road was built from Selkirk to Winnipeg. Where we made the terminus, there was some facility for reaching the great stretch of water navigation to the north. We had this further inducement to select that point: that the Saskatchewan River falls into Lake Winnipeg, and as the Grand Rapids are comparatively short, means of transit would not be expensive there, which would open the navigation of the Saskatchewan River, north and south, as auxiliary to the operation of the railway further south. All this presented itself to us when discussing the line on which we shall ultimately fix the railway, and while I have no objection whatever to offer to the line that has been adopted by the Syndicate, from Winnipeg westward, I am still of opinion that the northern line would have been the more advantageous one for the country, and would have afforded every advantage which the south-west line now affords. The late Minister