

assuming, for the moment, that this is a reasonable measure, as it is their obvious policy. Granting them that assumption, it would tend to settle this question more or less if we had a general declaration on the floor of Parliament as to the policy of the Government, as to other lines projected or to be projected in the North-West, with reference to grants of land. We must observe that the proposals of the Government are varied very materially, in one particular which I have already adverted to, in practice, by which, in effect, the area is made larger for two lines, but they vary also in another particular, which deserves attention, and upon which, I think, explanation at this stage of the resolution would have been perfectly fairly to be expected. With reference to one of the roads, and that a road passing through some of the choicest sections of the country, as I understand the proposal of the Government, it is that the grant of land shall be of lands all fairly fit for settlement; and as to the other of his proposals, the grant is not of that character; so that a distinction is made as to one of these Acts from that which exists as to the other. That, I think, is fairly a subject for explanation, inasmuch as it involves, very obviously, a question of policy. I need hardly say that what one of these companies gets all future companies will ask for, and indeed we may expect that those who have applied for and have been given something less than that which this company has got will call for the conditions which this company has got, and will ask why they should be placed in an inferior position to that which this particular company occupies. And so, it seems to me, it was a very questionable policy to make exceptional provisions, that the general provision ought to have ruled, except in so far as the circumstances of some particular locality might operate a difference, which, upon that ground, would render plain and intelligible a variation from that principle. I do not see any such circumstances as justify this variation. Another point which I have mentioned in the debate—I think on the Address—and which I think of very great consequence, is the question of a condition which I do not see in any of the Orders in Council, and which I had hoped to see there: that is, some condition which shall ensure that these agricultural lands shall be open for settlement, at moderate prices, on conditions of actual settlement. Now, the grant which the hon. gentleman proposes to assent to to-night is on no less an acreage than within a few acres of four millions and a half—as I roughly summed up the figures—alongside and closely adjoining a number of the railways which the Government think most important. Now, if there be one thing with reference to the land policy of the Administration which I think experience has already established we ought to be careful about, it is this question of the land being open to the actual settler, this question of the intending settler knowing the terms and conditions upon which, when he sees land vacant, he would be sure to get it. I need hardly tell hon. gentlemen opposite that our neighbors on the other side of the line have had considerable experience in assisting railways by grants of land; and I suppose I can cite six, eight or ten different provisions in different grants to railway corporations in the United States, designated, more or less perfectly, to protect the principle to which I have referred, the great principle of keeping the land open for the actual settler. Now, I am sorry that in the Orders in Council which were brought down and which indicate the conditions upon which the Government has proposed to confer those lands upon these companies, nothing should be said upon that subject, and I should be relieved to learn from the Government that notwithstanding the absence of such information in the Orders in Council we may hope for some practical proposal yet to be made by which we may secure these results. Early in the history of the various land measures of this Government they established belts, I

think five in number—there may have been six—on each side of the location of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The fifth belt was a very wide belt; I think it was as much as 50 miles. They proposed to sell these lands at varying prices, but not upon conditions of settlement, and to sell them at a tenth down and the balance in ten annual instalments; and the result was that a very large area of land was taken up, choice land in the Province of Manitoba was taken up by speculators, who paid 10 cents an acre down, and speculated upon the margin. Others, of course, who bought in the \$2 belt paid 20 cents, but for this trifle, this deposit, as you may call it, they obtained a title to the land, which enabled them to lock it up and disabled the settler from obtaining possession. So with reference to other operations which have, from time to time, taken place in the country; so with reference to other lock-ups which have, from time to time, taken place—some of them in connection with the original settlement of the Manitoba troubles, under which quantities of land were alienated under exceptional circumstances, but with unfortunate results as to the future of the country itself. Now, surely it is useful to refer to all these things upon an occasion in which it is proposed to initiate a system of free grants of land in aid of branch railways, in order that we may, if we can, so hedge around these grants, not so as to embarrass the railway companies in obtaining substantial profits from the land, but as much as, consistently with accomplishing the object of the grant, if that be at all possible—and I believe it to be quite possible—may result in our telling the settler: Now, here is a railway belt along the line of railway where you can go, and there are Government sections which you can get free or pre-empt, and if you choose the railway lands you know the maximum price you have got to pay, and you know, if nobody else has entered into possession of that land for actual settlement purposes, you will have the right to enter and take possession and cultivate the soil. What we want is to secure, as far as possible, the early settlement of the country; and I am sure we feel, more than ever we felt before, to-day, that we must hope to secure that by settlement along the lines of railway. It seems to me extremely obvious that that must be our main dependence for a considerable time to come, much more strongly than it has been, in view of the events of this winter. Therefore, the question to which I have alluded has assumed a special degree of importance from these events. Now, Sir, I do not propose to trouble the House further at this moment. As I have said, I purposely abstain from entering into the consideration of the merits of any one of these grants, of the previous history, of the actual effect of the grant, or of the correspondence which has led up to the grant, thinking it more convenient to do that in committee, where we can have a conversational discussion; but what I have done rather refers to those considerations which I should have thought would have so far directed the attention of the Government as to have induced observations upon them on the motion that you leave the Chair.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I cannot at all object to the mode or line of argument taken by the hon. gentleman. It is a very important subject, involving the grant of a very large tract of land, and closely connected with the future development and progress of the North-West. The hon. gentleman spoke of a change in the policy of the Government; that at first they had proceeded by executive action, under the general power given to them by the Dominion Lands Act, to sell those lands, and that now they have come to Parliament with a change of policy, in order to assist railways by free grants. Well, that is so. But we must look back a little to the change of circumstances which has taken place since the first policy was adopted. At the time when the first application was made—which, I think, was