

expenditure on the Fort Francis Lock, so far as the Public Accounts afford information, amounts to \$163,662. That was it up to the 30th of June last: since then there has been six months of expenditure, the amount of which is not before us. I may safely say, however, that the expenditure on that work—for I visited it last summer and saw what was being done—cannot have been less than \$8,000 per month, or in round figures \$100,000 per year. If it does not exceed that I shall be very much surprised. When an expenditure is going on, especially for a purpose, which to the public mind is not clearly of public utility, I think, at any time, it is the duty of this House to enquire into it; and in the present state of the finances of the country, it is doubly a duty to make such an enquiry. I have searched the Debates of Parliament for information on this question, and the first mention of the Fort Francis Lock that I find is in the House of Commons *Hansard* 1875, folio 508, and again at folios 1073 and 1074. I shall read what is there said on the subject, by the Hon. Mr. Mackenzie, the Commissioner of Public Works and Prime Minister:—

“The entire distance from Red River to Lake Superior is in round numbers 430 miles by the Dawson route. Of this we have surveyed and located a line and asked for tenders for 155 or 160 miles. This leaves a distance between the two points of 270 miles. Of that distance we will be able by constructing two cheap wooden locks at Fort Francis, to obtain from Rat Portage uninterrupted steam navigation for a distance of nearly 200 miles to Sturgeon Falls at the east end of Rainy Lake. From this point eastward towards Lake Shebandowan, although there is a continuous water navigation with a number of small portages, still the country is, on the whole, favorable. \* \* \* \* We hope within two years, or two and a half at the outside, that we will have a railway finished at the eastern and western ends and with these and the locks at Fort Francis, we expect that the distance altogether may be traversed in four or five days at the outside, that now takes on the average from nine to twelve days.”

Now, hon. gentlemen, it is quite evident from the passage I have read, that the intention of the Government was to use the water stretches by way of Fort Francis, between Sturgeon Falls and Rat Portage. If that could have been done, I should have been very glad to have seen it carried out, and thus have postponed the construction of the railway between

*Hon. Mr. Macpherson,*

those two points for years to come, as the Minister of Public Works himself appears to have intended and expected. On the third of April, 1875, Mr. Mackenzie moved:—

“That the House do now ratify the contract entered into with Messrs. Sitton & Ward for the construction of the Pacific Railway extending from Fort William to Lake Shebandowan, a distance of about 45 miles, \* \* \* They obtained the advantage of that chain of water communication for a distance of 246 miles, after some slight improvements were carried out at Fort Francis which were provided for in the estimates. By these a means of communication would be established which would suffice for some years to come.”

These passages and all that the Minister of Public Works said then on the subject showed that he expected to use about 200 miles of water communication, to connect the Eastern and Western ends of the Canadian Pacific Railway, between Lake Superior and Red River. The next reference to the Fort Francis Lock I find in a return to Parliament, dated fifth of April, 1877. The first letter or memo. in that return is from Mr. Brauu, Secretary of the Department of Public Works, saying that the report of Mr. S. Hazlewood the engineer, giving an estimate of the cost of the works, had been mislaid, and that Mr. Hazlewood had been written to for a copy of it.

The estimate is not here and I have not seen it. The next letter dated 11th May 1875, is indeed a strange one. It is from the Secretary of the Public Works Department, to Mr. Hugh Sutherland, of Orillia, putting him in full charge of the works, but subject, so far as engineering was concerned, to Mr. Hazlewood. The following is an extract.

May 11th, 1875.

“SIR,—Referring to your letter of the 1st instant relative to the construction of the proposed locks on Rainy River, at Fort Francis, I am to state that you will have entire charge of the working parties, but in engineering matters will be subjected to the general directions of Mr. Hazlewood, or his assistants who may be detailed for that purpose. \* \* \* \* \*

“On reaching Fort Francis you will see Mr. Mortimer, Resident Engineer, who will be at once instructed to take soundings with a view to determine the exact points at which it would be most desirable to construct the canal locks at each, and you will then as speedily as possible ascertain the nature of the rock and the depth of various points, so that Mr. Mortimer can make a section.