

HON. MR. POWER—Where a notice of this sort is given it is not customary to ask the Government to answer the question forthwith. I think that the hon. gentleman, in putting the inquiry in the form in which it is, has opened the subject up for discussion; and it is a question of such importance that it should be discussed before the Government reply. In accordance with the practice of the House, I propose to discuss the matter a little before the leader of the House replies. I think that every hon. gentleman must feel that the remark which I ventured to make at the opening of the Session, that we had in the hon. gentleman who has just sat down a very valuable addition to the speaking power of the House, was well founded. The hon. member has put this case before the House in a very clear and striking way; and if he has failed to carry conviction it is not his fault, but the fault of his case. The hon. gentleman's proposition is that without further inquiry we should forthwith either construct a railway 700 miles long or guarantee the construction of the road—that we should give a guarantee which, under the circumstances, will be equivalent to undertaking to pay for the road. That is the proposition; and hon. gentlemen who know anything about the Intercolonial Railway and know what it has cost and how it has been regarded in the past by all eastern Canada, can form some idea of what the extent of the hon. gentleman's proposition is. He proposes that we should undertake to spend something like thirty million dollars.

HON. MR. DEVER—Forty millions.

HON. MR. POWER—I wish to be reasonable. It is certainly to spend not less than twenty-five millions, and probably thirty million dollars, in constructing a railway from Winnipeg to Fort Churchill. Now, I think when any company or any member of Parliament makes a proposition of that kind—when he proposes that the Government shall undertake to spend or to guarantee so large a sum of money—he should be prepared with the most conclusive evidence that the scheme upon which that money is to be expended is one which will repay the country for the expenditure. In that point the hon. gentleman has failed. He has not removed doubts which have always existed in the minds of people

in eastern Canada as to whether the Hudson Bay route was an available and reliable commercial route. I understood the hon. gentleman to say that a portion of the year's crop might go out each season; and the hon. gentleman, I think, arrived at that conclusion only by straining the evidence which he himself submitted to us. He read the statement of an observer at Ashe Inlet, on the northern side of Hudson Strait. The observer said he thought there was nothing to obstruct the navigation of the strait up to the 1st October, and under favorable circumstances to the 15th October. When the hon. gentleman came later on to practically re-state what he had stated in the beginning of his speech, he said the 1st of November or the middle of November.

HON. MR. BOULTON—I read the months of July, August, September and October.

HON. MR. POWER—I did not so understand the statement of Mr. Tyrrell, whom the hon. gentleman quoted. I thought that the observer spoke in a qualified manner of the latter half of October. As to the evidence of Mr. Tyrrell, I have not examined it very carefully; but it just happens that the observer at Ashe Inlet might not be in a position to speak as conclusively as to the navigation of the strait as an observer at Port Burwell. At Ashe Inlet the ice passing east from Hudson Bay has not been met by the current coming down Davis Strait; and there is a tremendous current and a great deal of ice generally found at the eastern opening of Hudson Strait. The greater part of that ice comes down through Davis Strait, and of course the observer at Ashe Inlet would see very little of that. He would only see the ice from the west go through Hudson Strait. As I have said, the thing which the hon. gentleman is bound to do first, before the Government are in a position to spend any money, or pledge the faith of the country to any expenditure, is to establish the navigability of Hudson Bay and Strait—that is, to establish that they are navigable for practical commercial purposes. In order to do that the hon. member has quoted Mr. Tyrrell, and has given the experience of a steamer called the "Arctic," which I presume from her name was peculiarly fitted to deal with