

—the number of miles finished—the course of the track to be followed and other particulars. Another gentleman considers that the duties of the Committee should be confined to a thorough investigation of the Accounts; and my honorable friend for Guysborough thinks the Committee of Public Accounts should be charged with the duty of investigating the Railway expenditures. As regards the two first, they appear to have been disposed of already; for commissioners have been appointed, who receive £1,700 to be divided among them, and whose duty it is to adjudicate upon all particulars relating to the route of the road, by the aid of their engineer, and to render the accounts to this House in every possible way and shape, both in the aggregate and particulars, so that we may know the cost of every mile of railroad, and of the whole, as far as it is finished; so that every member of this House may analyze, dissect, and understand them. To appoint a committee, therefore, to attend to this duty, would only be doing what ought to have been done before.

The most important point of consideration, is that which has been thrown out by my Hon. friend from Guysborough, and I regret to differ from him in opinion. I have always considered that the duty and responsibility of laying out the route of Railway ought to rest with the Commissioners. What can a Committee do on that subject? They may make enquiries, and examine Witnesses; but it is utterly impossible for them to arrive at a proper conclusion; because they could not get at the necessary information. On the other hand, the Commissioners have their officers all along the line, who judge by personal and ocular observation, and I may say that I believe both officers and Commissioners would act for the best interests of the Country. The same subject occupied the attention of the House last Session, and the House could only come to the conclusion that it was best to leave the matter in the hands of the Commissioners. The Committee can only form an opinion on loose and insufficient information. It may be well to appoint a Committee to investigate the accounts; but I think there will be little benefit resulting from their labours, as regards the location of the line.

Mr. M. I. Wilkins considered the committee proposed to be appointed a very important one. I think the committee of Public Accounts will not consider sufficiently the subject of the Railroad. They have enough to do besides. We want a special committee to investigate thoroughly what money has been expended, and whether it has been properly expended; to inform us, in fact, what we have received for the £216,000 that has been expended, and how much of the railroad has been built—so that a committee is actually indispensable; and I take it for granted that when any other public works are necessary to be considered, they should be referred to the same committee, and that

every hon. member of this House should have the opportunity of explaining his views before it. In deference to my hon. friend from Guysborough, I think the committee ought to be appointed—but I have very great objections that it should be a packed committee (*laughter*); and I wish it may be a large committee, in order that their report may be satisfactory to the Province.

Mr. Annand agreed with the last speaker that the subject should be tried out as regards expenditure, but had very great objections that the power of the Commissioners and the Governor in council, under the law, should be frittered away, when they had proceeded with the work, and entered into contracts, which it was for the interests of the country to have completed.

Hon. J. W. Johnston said that most of the information would be obtained by the report of the commissioners.

Mr. Wilkins—The committee should receive information from every source; the report might be contested or supported. The great object would be to make the commissioners render a proper report of our whole railway affairs. The committee could go far beyond and wide of the report altogether.

Hon. Attorney General—Let us see now what is the actual course of this business. No money can be drawn for the work without the signature of three commissioners; every shilling is verified by the signature of three, and at the end of every quarter an exact balance sheet is struck and checked by some member of the Government. I have always done that myself. Then, as regards the construction of the railway, it is done by tender and contract; so that, let not gentlemen suppose we have anything to conceal. We court the most ample enquiry, so that the House and people may know that all is right. I hope it will be a large committee, who will find that in the whole conducting of the business, there is not a shilling wrong; that they may enquire of the commissioners—where are your letters? where is your correspondence?

There are contracts now being taken to the amounts of £20,000 and it should be enquired—have you taken the lowest tender? and other particulars like that. We court enquiry; so that—insinuating that there is any thing to be found out, where there is nothing to be found out, is rather premature. The subject should be referred to the enquiry of a large, intelligent, and responsible committee. At the same time I should be very reluctant that any committee should undertake to give the commissioners any directions as to the progress of the work which has been already settled by law.

Mr. Marshall.—If that be the view of the case, I think there is great misunderstanding as to the duties of this House and any committee we may appoint. We have given power to the Commissioners, assisted by their Engineer, to point out what route the Rail Road ought to take. But do our functions