

the eastern section, so referred to, at 600 miles, then he rays :

"It is impossible to say what labor and materials may cost some years hence, when the period arrives for the eastern section to be undertaken. Taking the basis of present prices and present contracts, and adhering to the economic principles of construction set forth in the letters of yesterday, I feel warranted in stating that \$20,000,000 may be considered a fair estimate of the cost of opening the line from Fort William to the Eastern Terminus."

Now, it is to be observed, that the estimate of \$20,000,000 is based upon the economical principle of construction contained in the letter to the Minister, of the 15th April, and the reply of his officer of the same date, which involves the abandonment of the old system of high class works, easy grades and good curves, and the adoption of low class works, steep grades and sharp curves. The engineer adds :

"In order that the estimates of the cost of the line from Fort William to the Pacific, and from Fort William to the Eastern Terminus near Lake Nipissing, be clearly understood, I deem it proper to submit the following explanations :—

"I have, in previous reports laid before Parliament, advocated a location for the railway with generally light gradients and other favorable engineering features. The policy of the Government, as stated in your letter, likewise the change of line by the abandonment of the old location west of Red River, render it necessary on my part to modify the views I have previously held."

It is shown, therefore, repeatedly, that in making his estimate on the basis of a road, from 50 or 60 miles to the westward of Nipissing to Thunder Bay, he has abandoned the old system and adopted a cheaper railway. What we want, therefore, are such details as will enable us to judge what are the grades, curves and general class of structures, and the character of the general line that we propose, upon which \$20,000,000 are to be spent which, for 600 miles, would give \$33,333 per mile, so, with this information, we shall be able to know the general character of the line from Nipissing to the Pacific which we proposed in 1880, is as contrasted with the character of that line, which had been up to that time proposed. We shall thus be able to judge of the description of road we shall construct and hand over to the Syndicate, and, presumably, the line which the Syndicate itself is to construct, so far, at any rate, as its obligations to the contract go. I do not mean to say they may not better those obligations. They will do what seems to them good, but so far as the obligations of their contract go. It is not with any view to express or imply any opinion on this change of policy, nor to discuss the expediency of any change that I make these remarks, but simply with a view to pointing out that there was, in 1880, a material change of policy as to the character of the road, involving an enormous change as to the cost of its construction. It is important to us, in view of the policy for ten years maintained, that we should have a road with light gradients and every favorable engineering feature to know in how far this change of policy involves a departure, not merely as to price, but also as to the attainment of results, and it is for this reason that I have put in your hands this motion for further information.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. There is every desire on the part of the Government to furnish the hon. gentleman with all the information he and the House can desire, in order to an intelligent discussion of the very important question we have under consideration. But to comply, specifically, with the terms of his motion would require some months; I think, however, it will be possible to give all the information asked for necessary to the intelligent discussion of the question.

Mr. BLAKE. I had intended to suggest that, if there were any particulars for which a great deal of time would be required, it would be convenient that such as could be immediately supplied should be given now, the supplementary portions to be supplied as soon as possible.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. It would be impossible to give detailed information without full communication with Mr. BLAKE.

British Columbia, and that would not answer the object of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Blake). I have supplied, already, as clearly as I could, all the data necessary to a proper appreciation of the question before us. I will gladly furnish any information I possess in order to satisfy the hon. gentleman. But I may say that my case is a somewhat singular one. Almost the only ground on which I have had to defend myself, as a Minister, from the criticisms of hon. gentlemen opposite, is, that I continually come back to Parliament asking for less public money to accomplish the same object. Generally speaking, a Minister is obliged to come back to Parliament with apologies for having exceeded his estimates, and asking more money to accomplish the work in hand. I think that was found to be the general experience of Ministers of Railways or Public Works here and elsewhere; but my fortune, however, has been somewhat different. The charge to which I exposed myself was that I had asked too much; that my estimates had exceeded the amount required. I will endeavor to justify myself as far as I can by placing in the hands of the hon. gentleman information that ought to satisfy him that all these estimates were frankly and fairly stated to the House as far as the information in my possession enabled me to do so. The hon. gentleman has gone through very elaborate statements to show that the same engineers estimated some of the works at a higher cost to the country at one time than they did at another time. I do not think it is at all surprising, that, with increased information, the estimates, expectations and opinions as to the cost of certain works should vary sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another.

Mr. BLAKE. Hear, hear.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I hope we are getting wiser every day, that those who devote their time and attention to a great work, whether engineers or ministers, become better informed and able to produce fuller and more reliable statements, year by year, than they previously could. So far as I am concerned, I have always taken the House into my confidence in the fullest and frankest possible manner. All the information I could obtain I submitted to the House. When the very great reduction was made in the estimate submitted last Session, it was stated at once to the House that the Government being compelled reluctantly to go on with the construction of the road as a public work, directly carried on by the Government, and chargeable to the Treasury of the country, felt bound to reduce the expenditure as far as possible; and while it was stated to the House that so far as the line of the railway, that was then in a somewhat advanced condition between Thunder Bay and Red River, was concerned, we considered it true economy to preserve the very favorable gradients that had been established on that line, even although considerable addition in the expenditure should be made, although we considered it necessary to carry out the design of making it a first-class work, even although it should involve considerable additional cost, because it was the outlet to Lake Superior of the traffic of the North-West; still we felt that so far as the works in British Columbia were concerned, it was desirable to proceed in such a way as to secure, across the prairie, a colonization line of railway, reducing the expenditure in every way, and, at the same time, reduce the cost of construction in British Columbia, as far as was practicable. These opinions were fully stated to the House, and I am glad to say that the information obtained from the progress of the work, during the time that has elapsed since these estimates were submitted to the House, has enabled me to state that so far as the work between Thunder Bay and Red River is concerned, instead of being obliged, and I confess that we had under estimated the difficulties and the cost, I was placed in the position of being able to show to the House that we had effected a very large reduction in the