

marks at the committee stage, I have not hitherto occupied the attention of the House on this question. I want to invite the attention of the house for a short time to the question of the cost of this road, more particularly as reference has been made to it very repeatedly by hon. gentlemen opposite, most of whom have undertaken to accept and adopt certain figures which were read at an early stage of the discussion by my hon. friend the leader of the opposition. Now, my hon. friend, in his statement, has spoken of the obligations of this enterprise as being from \$155,000,000 to \$171,000,000. The word 'obligation' is used by my hon. friend in a way that might mislead. I know that my hon. friend would not say anything to mislead, but it is important, in considering this matter, to understand what the obligation of the government really is to which my hon. friend referred, and to understand that, while the government undertake to do certain things, they on the other side, have made provision to receive certain moneys and certain credits, and it is not until you have taken both sides of the account and struck your balance, that you have a true statement of what the obligations of the government are. If a merchant were called upon to render his account, and if he charged his customer for everything he received at a high price, and then charged him with a number of things he had not received, and then forgot to credit the items on the other side of the account, the result would be as fair a statement as the calculation which many of the hon. gentlemen opposite have presented in regard to this matter.

THE COUNTRY'S OBLIGATIONS.

I want to look for a little while at what our obligations are. It is true that we undertake to build the eastern division of the road, but it is also true that beyond providing seven years' interest on that division, we are under no obligation whatever. We undertake to build the road, but we have provided for a tenant to occupy it. If a man owns land and he undertakes to build a house which will improve the value of his land generally, even if he had not a tenant in sight it might be a very good transaction; but if the owner of the land has a tenant in sight to take a long lease on favourable terms to the owner, would it not be ridiculous to say that the man who built the house was improvident? We have provided for the building of this eastern section, and we have provided for giving seven years' interest free, but we have made provision for a good tenant who is to pay us our rental after the seven years, at what we regard as a fair rate. My hon. friend the leader of the opposition, in his first speech, which his friends have used generally—some of them magnified it and probably gave it a colour which the hon. gentleman did not intend for it—my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) commences his first plunge into financial delirium—I pay him the compliment of saying that it is not half as wild as that of his friend from West Toronto (Mr. Osler)—my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) begins by estimating \$40,000 per mile, which he says is a moderate estimate, for the construction of a road from Moncton to Winnipeg. The hon. gentleman did not give us a scintilla of evidence to back up that statement, although I think that the hon. gentleman should have named some authority for such a large estimate. I am bound to say from all the information I am able to get, that his estimate is entirely unwarranted. Last year in this House, I estimated the cost of the road from Quebec to Moncton on a basis of \$25,000 per mile, on what I considered good engineering authority, but I added that that was for a railway of about the same, or perhaps a little better character than the Intercolonial Railway. I realized, however, that we wanted to make this new road a very excellent road in every respect, and I added twenty-five per cent to that estimate, and made my calculations on the basis of \$31,250 per mile for that section. The leader of the opposition called it \$40,000 per mile, but he gave not a shadow of authority in support or his figures.

AS TO THE GRADES.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Has the Minister of Finance any engineer's report which says it can be built, on grades of four-tenths per cent, for \$31,250 per mile.

Mr. FIELDING. My hon. friend and I have some little Irish about us, and I