

document that was laid before parliament. Now we have another story. Honourable gentlemen will remember that almost the very last words I uttered on this question last session were to the effect that the route was a very unfortunate one, that a more northerly route would be better with respect to the quality of the country. I did not know anything beyond that, but I had information which I had collected from geological surveys, and from a map prepared by Dr. Bell many years ago, and which was not prepared for the purpose of bolstering up any particular policy, that the route proposed in Dr. Ami's pamphlet and announced by the government as the route—in other words, the direct route from Quebec to Winnipeg—was not a practical route at all, and that the country through which it would pass was not valuable either as agricultural lands or for lumbering purposes. It appears that the government have changed their minds with regard to that subject. It seems that they have gone back on this map that was submitted to us with so much assurance during the last session of parliament. I am sorry my hon. friend from Delorimier is not present because he became particularly responsible for the authenticity of that map and talked in the most glowing terms to this House about that route, and advanced some personal assurances in order to strengthen the claims that were put forward for this route. But the Minister of Justice has been talking and he states that that will not be the route; that the government find that a more northerly route is a much better one, and that that will be the route which the government will adopt. Hon. gentlemen who will remember all that took place in this House last year, the submission of this report, the statements that were made backing it by members of the government and supporters of the government, will hardly be prepared for the announcement made by the Minister of Justice the other day. But the announcement has been made, and almost simultaneously with that announcement by the Minister of Justice, another geologist is heard from. It is a strange way I must admit of finding routes for a railway to go to geologists. We always used to think that the proper course was to set engineers to work and get the opinions of engineers. But

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON.

this government appears to be relying on the opinions of geologists. Mr. Bell, the director of the Geological Survey, gave a lecture in Quebec the other day. We can readily understand at whose instance he is heard from at this very moment, and he says among other things the following:—

Again the actual difference would be greatly increased along the generally straight route by the numerous minor departures from a straight line, which would be rendered necessary by the uneven character of the country, as compared with the northern route. A comparison with the existing section of the Canadian Pacific Railway between Mattawa and Rat Portage, shows this amounts to nearly 30 per cent increase in the mileage, as compared with the straight line between these points, and there would be a corresponding disadvantage on the proposed southern route, to say nothing of the innumerable steep grades both eastward and westward. The nominally straight line between the head of Lake Nipigon and Quebec, on this standard of comparison, would really be one thousand and fifty-three miles.

Dr. Bell, the geological expert of the government, who tells us that this route between Quebec and Winnipeg, the direct route that was eulogized so highly in parliament last year would compare with the Canadian Pacific line from Mattawa to Rat Portage where the distance was increased owing to curvature and owing to deviations in order to get anything like decent grades, by 30 per cent of the entire distance, and states the same results would be reached if it was attempted to run a direct route from Winnipeg to Quebec. The distance would be increased by 30 per cent and would make it really longer than a more northerly line, though it took a long swoop to the north in order to reach Winnipeg. It is necessary only to give the matter a little consideration to see how ill-digested this scheme was, and how uninformed the government were with regard to this scheme when after six months the director of the Geological Survey is put forward to make adverse statements with regard to the route which the government eulogized so highly during the last session of parliament. This is another evidence that the government have gone into this question without any proper inquiry or preparation and the result is as might be expected, that they made very great and serious errors and that they were entirely wrong with regard to the feasibility of the route which they decided last year to be the route of this railway. Other matters connected with the location of the road might be referred to