

of the Government, especially when we take into consideration that it is an impossibility for the Canadian Pacific Railway to procure a connection with the Maritime Provinces by any other line, and the absolute necessity which exists for a line which will secure us connection with the railway system of the west, not only having the shortest line to Montreal, but also—which is far more important, in my opinion—having extensions into the west, to connect us with the great grain centres, not only of Canada, but even of Chicago—I say, in view of these considerations it is of vital importance that we should endeavor to get such a line worked by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.

Mr. LESAGE. (Translation.) Mr. Chairman, before these resolutions are adopted in committee, I feel it my duty to say a few words on the subject, and to examine their intrinsic value. I do not intend, at this late hour of the night, to make a long speech, especially as it might be considered that I have more than a personal interest in the question, but there is a fact which the present discussion has shown to me, a fact which had not yet come under our notice, and which I would have noticed with regret. That fact is, according to the speech delivered by my hon. friend, the member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Hall), and that delivered by my hon. friend, the member for Stanstead (Mr. Colby), I would always have thought that in railway matters the engineers were competent authorities. I had never dared to speak on the question of the short line in this House without having under my hand the papers required to establish the position which I occupied as a member from the district of Quebec, and having, by chance, the combination line within my district, I say I have noticed the fact that it seems that all the engineers are dishonest men. The hon. member for Sherbrooke has taken as his ground for the discussion of the question in which we are interested in so high a degree, and in which he is interested personally, like myself—and I do not try to conceal that fact—that the engineers who do not agree with Mr. Schreiber are men who have made false reports. My hon. friend from Stanstead, corroborating these assertions, even went further. Not only did he pretend that Mr. Light had made a report more or less reasonable or rational, and I will even say a report signed beforehand, but he has even tried to force upon us, from a sympathetic point of view, in a most brilliant peroration, such as he is always wont to make, the question of the short line, on account of the sacrifices which the municipalities of the Eastern Townships had made in favor of the roads which are connected with this line. Mr. Chairman, I wish to put myself here in the favorable position which my county has given me on that question. It is true that the famous combination line which has been so much discussed to-night, and which has been discussed in a more or less partial manner, in my opinion, goes through the county of Dorchester, which I have the honor to represent. But I am bound to say that the county of Dorchester, which is composed of sixteen large parishes, has sent to the hon. First Minister, who was then Acting Minister of Railways, petitions signed by the great majority of the county and representing the most influential part of the population, reminding him, in the first place, of a fact which had been recorded in the Parliamentary papers by the then Minister of Railways, Sir Charles Tupper, who had declared that the shortest and most advantageous line would be chosen. I, as member for the county of Dorchester, and our friends thought, according to a report made in 1834 by Mr. Yule, civil engineer, that we had the shortest and the most advantageous line, and under those circumstances I have thought it my duty to ask the hon. Minister of Railways for a survey of the Etchemin valley. That was kindly granted to me. Mr. Light, provincial engineer, was sent to make a barometric survey, as far as the Maine boundary.

Mr. STAIRS.

A little later on, not being satisfied with that survey, which was not a complete survey of the valley, I renewed my demand to the Minister of Railways, who answered that satisfaction would be given to me. In the course of the two following months, Mr. Wicksteed, an engineer connected with the Ottawa Railway Department, was sent, and he said to me, in an interview I had with him: "I was sent here to make a barometric survey of the valley of the Etchemin River." I said to him: "I do not think that this will be useful, for it has already been done by Mr. Light." Mr. Wicksteed said: "It is not made over the whole road." Then he made a barometric survey from Chaudière Junction to Lake Churchill, which is about 40 miles on the other side of the Maine boundary. A little later on, I again insisted upon the Government placing us on an equal footing with the other rival lines, by granting us instrumental surveys. The answer was favorable, and I think I may remind this House that in two different circumstances my hon. friend the member for Montmagny (Mr. Landry) and myself, have put questions to the Government, asking for instrumental surveys. These have not been made, and therefore I think my hon. friend, the member for Stanstead, has gone a little too far when he compared the various lines and when he pronounced in favor of the International. Why should Mr. Schreiber be more credible than Mr. Light, Mr. Wicksteed or Mr. Vernon Smith? They are three engineers whom we had not asked, but whom we had accepted from the Government; and when these reports are discussed before the House, we are told that they are not true, that they are exaggerated reports. Well, Mr. Chairman, I ask you, what are we to believe? For my part, when I submitted the question to the Government, I have not made a sectional question of it; I made a federal question of it. We had the promise from the Government that the shortest and the most favorable line would be chosen. It seems to me that that promise was sacred, and when we asked for surveys, and when I had the honor to present petitions, such as those which I have mentioned, it seems to me that it was a proof that we were not making a local question of it. Bear in mind, that on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, from the county of Lévis to the State of Maine, on an area covering sixty-seven miles in length and fifty miles in breadth, there is not one solitary railway. The question now before us cannot be discussed before the House from a sectional standpoint. Sixteen parishes are saying to the Government: If you wish to carry out the policy inaugurated by the construction of the Pacific Railway, that is, to have a through line on Canadian soil, although we have not the advantage of having direct communications with the large centres, we are ready to sacrifice all that in favor of the policy you have inaugurated. We are now asking you if you wish to have the short line. Considered from the point of view of the distance, and taking into account the curves and grades, we ask you to adopt the line of the River Etchemin, if it offers more advantages. Mr. Chairman, I can say it here, I do not fear to be contradicted by the reports of any engineers. The Etchemin River valley does not need any favor. It is a bed formed by nature for a railway. It has been repeated—and Mr. Schreiber has not feared to make false statements to support his contention—he has pretended that Mr. Light made false statements. Well, Mr. Chairman, I am not an engineer, I am not a railway man; I am unable to say whether Mr. Light stated real facts or not, but I say that Mr. Schreiber, when he saw fit, in order to give more weight to his own assertions, to strike off certain words from a report, in order to kill that report, put himself in a very bad position indeed. The valley of the Etchemin River, as I said just now, does not want any favors. And I repeat it, we want surveys by competent engineers, in whom we have confidence. We ask for a report made after a survey, and not a report prepared and signed beforehand; that is all we ask. It seems to me I am taking a very dis-