

to authorise the letting of these contracts without its sanction. That basis was, that the work should be commenced in British Columbia, in 1879. But tenders were not called for till near the end of 1879. The first contracts were not let till December of that year, and the last was not let until the 10th February, 1880, two days before the meeting of this Parliament; so that, for several reasons, the grounds upon which the hon. gentleman had asked Parliament to give him special authority, had failed. They had failed in this, that the construction could not be commenced until after Parliament was in Session, and, therefore, there was no ground for the action; they had failed in this that no inconvenience or delay would be caused by waiting for the assent of Parliament. Another ground on which the authority given by Parliament ought not to have been exercised, is this: the House was led into the adoption of the series of resolutions in which this authority is contained on the statement made by the Government as to the certainty of their success in obtaining Imperial aid. They wholly failed in that; the basis for the authority disappeared, and, therefore, the course they pursued in using the authority was in this as well as the other particulars censurable. Again, the report of the Chief Engineer justified, and in fact rendered proper further investigation before fixing on the route. This contract which they have let without the sanction of Parliament will reach, according to the estimate, \$9,100,000, and with the rolling-stock, rails, etc., the line will cost certainly not less than \$10,000,000, according to the tenders. That is the estimate, I observe, from the hon. Minister's statement, which the Chief Engineer now makes with reference to the contract. The hon. Minister observed that he had adopted an entirely different practice from that of his predecessor with reference to the letting of contracts. He said the contracts on the eastern end had been let on imperfect surveys and inadequate information, which had resulted in great loss and in the disappointment of expectations which had been formed. He, however, undertook to pursue a different course, to secure complete investigation and absolute certainty, as far as certainty can be obtained in these matters, as a pre-

liminary to the letting of his contracts, and I think the rule he laid down was an excellent one. I think the fullest information ought to be obtained in the interests of the country, with reference to the character of the work, and so forth, before the work is let. We know the reasons which induced such departure as was made from this custom in the earlier days of letting this work, when the hon. member for Cumberland, then in Opposition, cheered the then First Minister when he announced his intention of at once letting the contracts. If the principle which the hon. Minister so ostentatiously put forward as governing his action was specially applicable anywhere, that point was British Columbia. But how far the hon. gentleman's practice on this matter conformed with his pretensions is to be found in the memorandum to the schedules for the Columbia section, which were submitted for the information of intending tenderers. There will be found there a note in these words:

"Some of the quantities are estimated from preliminary location measurements, and may be considered roughly approximate. Other items are merely conjectural, and are placed herein for the purpose of obtaining rates."

This was the thorough, exhaustive, minute and detailed survey; this was the accurate information which the hon. gentleman got before he let the Yale-Kamloops contract! Some of the estimates are simply roughly approximate! Others are merely conjectural and are placed for the purpose of obtaining rates! As to the eastern contracts, if I am rightly informed, there was no information of any material consequence in the hon. gentleman's hands which was not in the hands of the hon. member for Lambton before he left office.

Mr. PLUMB: Section 15?

Mr. BLAKE: If my hon. friend will allow me to continue, he will soon have an opportunity to enliven the House with one of his short speeches. It may be permitted to a person who has not gone over the ground, who has not even made a preliminary location measurement, who has not even made a conjectural estimate of the items, to make a conjecture in the gross, based upon former experience, based on former reports, based upon what is known of other sections of the Railway, and from what has happened as to other roads, based on the