

that they are not to close that mortgage to which the hon. Secretary of State has referred, for twelve months, on the ground that they want to give the owners of the bridge an opportunity of paying off the mortgage and taking possession of it as owners. In the future, in case the National Transcontinental Railway goes to Fredericton, and crosses that bridge, it may possibly be of some value. The object of that amendment made in the House of Commons giving the power to the government to close the mortgage finally at the end of twelve months and take possession of the bridge, was to prevent the owners of the bridge at some future period, should the government take possession of it without foreclosure, compelling the government to account for the receipts during the period it was in their possession. We know in Ontario what the law is in respect to mortgages. The original Bill as introduced had no provision of that kind. The hon. member for Hamilton pointed out the difficulties in which the government might be involved in the future in case the bridge should become a valuable property, and a demand be made upon the government for a statement of receipts and expenditures. Under the law, they would have a right to demand that they should account for them. It was pointed out, and it is a grave question—at least so some legal gentlemen say—as to whether the Dominion has a right to go even that far in assuming the ownership of the bridge. However, that is not a point that we need discuss now. If I am wrong, the hon. gentleman will put me right.

Hon. Mr. DOMVILLE—The right of foreclosure exists under the Act without going to the court.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Yes, we are to give now \$800,000 for a property which is certainly not worth that sum. If that be a paying road, as it has been represented, then the owners would not be likely to part with it. They have been trying for years and years to sell that road to the government. The information that I have today is that competent engineers have been over that road and their report is that it will cost at least \$4,000 per mile to put it in a proper shape for use. Then, in addition to that, we have no statistics to show what the earnings or cost of the road have been,

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL.

nor the aid which it has received from the Dominion government, the local government and the municipalities. When this question was first mooted a month ago I asked the Secretary of State if he would endeavour to obtain the information which would be necessary to enable this House to deal with a question of the kind. None of that information has been laid before parliament. No one knows what the original cost was, what subsidies were given in aid of it, or what state the road is in at the present moment. My information is, as I have already stated, from engineers, that it would require at least \$4,000 per mile to put it in running order. Then there is another point we ought to know before the road is purchased. What is the weight of the rails laid on that road? Perhaps the hon. member for Rothesay could tell us.

Hon. Mr. DOMVILLE—I do not know.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—I have been told that the weight of those rails is only fifty-six pounds to the yard.

Hon. Mr. DOMVILLE—I should judge about that.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND—They are over sixty pounds.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—If they are fifty-six pounds to the yard, what does that mean? It means a re-railing of the whole road.

Hon. Mr. DOMVILLE—Not necessarily.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Does anybody suppose that the heavy engines of the Intercolonial Railway, of which this is to form a branch, and the heavy traffic it is expected will run over it, will be safe on rails weighing fifty-six pounds to the yard? Every change on the Intercolonial Railway has been to increase the weight of rails in order that they may do the business of the road more rapidly, and the engines upon it are very large and powerful. We know that from the large estimates that have been voted by parliament for that purpose, so that we are really buying a comparatively worn-out road, and involving the country in another heavy expenditure. I venture to predict that instead of \$800,000, the road will cost before it is in a position to make it up to the standard of the Intercolonial Railway a couple of million dollars. I do