

the railroad should be destroyed. This was predicated, perhaps, on a very long chance that coastal communications might be interrupted.

Mr. GREEN: The chance was not so long at one time.

Mr. CRERAR: Perhaps not; I agree with the hon. member for Vancouver South that there was a definite possibility. That is why the road was undertaken. Nothing was known about the country, so that reconnaissance surveys had to be run. The work was entrusted to the Department of Mines and Resources, and under the surveys and engineering branch, in charge of Mr. Wardle, these surveys were made as speedily as possible. Undoubtedly greater difficulties intervened than had been expected. Surveys had to be made. There was a good deal of rock work, and much heavy timber to be moved. There was difficulty in getting labour and in getting materials. There were unfavourable climatic conditions, all of which increased the cost of the road, and delayed its construction very considerably beyond the period at which it was hoped it would be completed.

The fortunes of war have changed. If conditions at the beginning of 1942 had been as they are to-day, the probability is that the road would not have been recommended. It was built as insurance, and was thoroughly justified on that ground.

Mr. REID: Why not complete it?

Mr. CRERAR: I shall deal with that. The road was not constructed as an ordinary provincial road. The building of roads within provinces is the function and responsibility of the provinces.

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: Not all roads.

Mr. CRERAR: Yes, all roads, with the exception of the transcontinental highway, where the federal government has assumed certain responsibilities. But this road was constructed for military purposes. That military need has disappeared.

Mr. GREEN: Not necessarily.

Mr. CRERAR: Well, the military need, in the opinion of the chiefs of staff, has, I think pretty well disappeared.

Mr. REID: Sometimes they have been wrong.

Mr. CRERAR: The road, in addition to the original section from Terrace to Prince Rupert, has an additional mileage from Terrace to Kitwanga. That was also included in the construction. It is expected that the total cost will be between \$10,000,000 and \$11,000,000.

[Mr. Crerar.]

Mr. HANSON (Skeena): The minister has said that the chiefs of staff have decided that the completion of the road is not necessary. I am of opinion, and I am sure that the chiefs of staff recommended that this road should be completed—

Mr. CRERAR: Well, now—

Mr. HANSON (Skeena): —because it was necessary.

Mr. CRERAR: The chiefs of staff recommended the road, in the first instance. Now they do not think conditions warrant the government extending the road. I think that is right.

Mr. SINCLAIR: Finish, not extend.

Mr. CRERAR: No; the demand is that the road should be built further by the federal government. The whole matter was carefully considered by the government. In this appropriation we have \$3,000,000 to complete some sections of the road which were not completed, and for maintenance purposes during the year.

Now, what the province gets out of it is 110 miles of a good and completed road, with bridges.

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: What does the dominion get out of it?

Mr. CRERAR: The dominion gets—

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: Security.

Mr. CRERAR: Well, yes, it gets security, which was indicated in the first instance. But I say now—

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: Is the war over?

Mr. CRERAR: I say now to the committee that I do not think the road would have been undertaken, in the light of conditions as they exist to-day.

Mr. REID: The same applies to the Alaska highway.

Mr. CRERAR: Of course.

Mr. GREEN: Will this vote finish the road?

Mr. CRERAR: This vote will complete the road to Kitwanga, and there is in the vote the amount necessary to maintain it during this season. There is the possibility that in the spring some bridges or culverts may go out. The road is new; we have to gain by experience. But the vote was intended to cover the completion of the road from Kitwanga to Prince Rupert, and to maintain it this season.

Mr. GREEN: Apparently there are some sections which will not be finished. Which sections are they?