

tractors to perform. There is some satisfaction in that, and I believe I am entitled to claim on behalf of the Government that in that respect our position is absolutely unassailable.

This brings me to the contract itself, and just at the outset I desire to convey as clearly as I can, in a general bird's-eye view, as it were, of its clauses and of its provisions, some idea of it before I get into a closer examination of its details. What the Government wanted to accomplish was this: we wanted to secure a sleigh road within six weeks from the 25th of January last, all the way from the mouth of the Stikine River to Teslin Lake, with shelters and stopping places provided every twenty-five miles along the entire route; we wanted to build a railway, suitably equipped, up to the standard of the Kaslo and Slocan narrow-gauge railway, 150 miles, or thereabouts, from the navigable waters of the Stikine to the navigable waters of Teslin Lake.

Mr. CHARLTON. What is the estimated cost of that 150 miles of narrow-gauge road?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. The estimated cost?

Mr. CHARLTON. Yes.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I have not the figures exactly before me, but I understand it was estimated to cost in the neighbourhood of \$25,000 per mile. Of course it might cost something less than that in a different part of the country, where there are greater facilities for construction. I am glad the hon member (Mr. Charlton) has invited my attention to that matter. It is impossible for any one to say just what the cost of the railway may be. Transportation, of course, is very expensive, and the conditions are absolutely and entirely different from those which prevail in other parts of Canada. The high rate of wages, cost of living, severity of the climate and many other conditions enter so very largely into the calculation of cost, that even an experienced person, unless he himself had prosecuted similar work in that country, would scarcely be justified in affirming that he knew what the cost of such a work would be.

Mr. FOSTER. Did I understand my hon. friend (Mr. Blair) aright in saying that, after sending engineers and explorers and receiving their reports, he, as Minister of Railways, signed a contract giving so much for the building of the road, and has not under his hand an estimate from his engineers of what that road would cost?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. That is what the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) precisely understands: that I have not under my eye an estimate, or a statement professing to be an at all close

or accurate statement of what the probable cost of that railway would be. Now, not only did we desire to have completed and equipped this railway with great speed, but—

Mr. MONTAGUE. Might I ask the hon. gentleman (Mr. Blair) if any such statement had been asked for from the engineers who went over the road?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I cannot say. The hon. member (Mr. Montague) will understand that I have not been in communication with the engineers.

Mr. FOSTER. Somebody ought to introduce the Bill who does understand it.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. The idea of the hon. gentleman and my idea, as to who should introduce the Bill, may not agree. The aim of the Government was in this contract to secure, further, that this railway should be constructed with such speed that railway trains carrying freight and passengers would be steaming over the whole line by the first of September next, and thereby to secure two months open navigation this year of the Teslin Lake and following waters. In the fourth place, it was the object of the Government to build a line by an all-Canadian route, thereby applying every available means for securing the vast anticipated trade of that region for the people of our own country. In the fifth place, it was our object to secure necessary steamship transport facilities from Teslin Lake to Dawson City immediately on the opening of the railway, and to so settle the terms of the contract as that the Yukon country should, as it were, pay for these advantages itself, so that not a dollar of the cost should be paid by the Government of Canada, or a dollar of liability assumed by us in that regard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are the objects which the Government desired to accomplish in making the contract; these are the objects which we have succeeded in accomplishing in the making of the contract, and we have received from the contractors no less a sum than a quarter million dollars deposit as security for the faithful carrying out of the contract by them.

Mr. FOSTER. On which you pay interest?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. On which we pay interest, while the money remains in our hands, unless it shall be forfeited.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Mr. Fielding). And on which we receive interest.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. And upon which we receive interest as well as pay interest.