

Mr. LANCASTER. He was more correct than your engineer.

Mr. FIELDING. Neither of them was correct. My hon. friend's estimate of the cost of the road from Winnipeg to Moncton was \$75,000,000; and yet he is now putting forward the statement that it will cost \$124,000,000. And so it would seem that neither my hon. friend nor I was very near the proper estimate.

Mr. LANCASTER. Who was the nearest?

Mr. FIELDING. Well, there is not much to choose between us. My estimate of the cost of the road from Quebec to Winnipeg was \$35,000 per mile, and my hon. friend's estimate was \$40,000 per mile, so that there was not a wide difference between us.

Mr. LAKE. He did not take into account the Quebec classification.

Mr. FIELDING. My hon. friends have not made much of the Quebec classification. What will be clearly understood by the public as to the Quebec classification will be this, that an engineer, who doubtless meant well, but was mistaken, made some accusations against the National Transcontinental Commissioners implying that they acted improperly and perhaps corruptly with regard to the classification of the road; that when the matter was investigated and that engineer was brought face to face with the committee and with the gentlemen concerned, he frankly said that he had made a mistake and withdrew his charges.

Mr. LENNOX. We do not and the country does not have to depend on Major Hodgins at all in the matter.

Mr. FIELDING. But as Major Hodgins, the gentleman who made the accusation, came before the committee and frankly acknowledged that he was mistaken and had no longer any charge to make, the country will understand that.

Mr. LENNOX. Major Hodgins was not the only person who made accusations. Vastly more important accusations were made by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company, and they stand on record yet.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Might I ask, for information, what did Major Hodgins withdraw?

Mr. FIELDING. I was not present at the meeting. I read it in the public press, and I am stating it as the public know it, that the gentleman who made these accusations came before the committee after the inquiry and frankly acknowledged that he was wrong, stating that the points of difference were points of difference between engineers, upon which men might honestly exercise difference of opinion. The three salient facts were: first, that Major Hodgins made his accusations; second, that Major Hodgins withdrew his accusations; and

third, that even if they wanted to do so, the Transcontinental Railway Commissioners could not change the classification, because that is the work of the chief engineer, and there is not a man on either side of the House who will dare to asperse the integrity of Hugh Lumsden.

Now, my hon. friend the leader of the opposition, in presenting this deplorable picture of the future, this picture of a time when the roads would not earn anything and the revenues go to the bow-wows, gave a statement of the enormous addition that would have to be made to the net debt of the country in consequence of this arrangement. My hon. friend said:

The public debt of Canada at present is, I suppose, from \$265,000,000 to \$268,000,000.

He is there alluding to the net debt, which is usually the basis of our calculations. Then he goes on to say:

The public debt of Canada at present is, I suppose, from \$265,000,000 to \$268,000,000. The cost of this road will amount to at least \$190,000,000 before we are through with it; and unless some considerable portion of that amount can be paid out of revenue—which does not seem very probable under present conditions—the total debt of this country, by the time this road is completed, without our spending a dollar for the development of our ports and inland waterways and on subsidies to railways or for any other of the enormous calls that will be made on the treasury within the early future—without taking into consideration a single one of these demands on the public treasury, the public debt of Canada is likely to reach \$450,000,000 before we pay for the building of this National Transcontinental Railway.

I say again that my hon. friend indulges in pessimism of the worst kind. He can see no hope of anything but ruin coming out of this thing. He cannot think it possible that any portion of the payments made on this work will be paid out of revenue. He is of opinion that every dollar of the cost of the road, which at one place he puts at \$190,000,000 and at another place at \$250,000,000, must be added to the net debt of the country. I hope my hon. friend is not always going to be in such a gloomy frame of mind. Things are not so bad as that, I can assure him. As a considerable portion of that money has already been expended, we are able to put his theory to the test. Up to the 30th June, as near as I can get to it, we have paid out on Transcontinental Railway account \$30,000,000. According to my hon. friend's idea, we must have added that \$30,000,000 to the net debt of Canada; but I am glad to be able to tell him that we have not added one-half of that to the net debt of Canada.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What was it?

Mr. FIELDING. I have not the exact figures, but I think it would not be more than \$14,000,000.