

for communication with the Senate on this subject,

Hon. Mr. VIDAL gave notice that he would move, to-morrow, that the other Senate Committee be discharged.

LIBEL.

Hon. Mr. KAULBACH rose to move the second reading of his bill respecting the crime of libel.

Several members objected that the bill was not printed in French, when the honourable gentleman consented to postpone it till Wednesday.

INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY.

Hon. Mr. L'ETHELIEU moved the first reading of the bill, from the Commons, respecting the construction of the Intercolonial Railway. He explained its chief provision, which was to remove the present powers of the Commissioners, and vest them in the Public Works Department, under the supervision of whose head the work of construction would be henceforth prosecuted. He believed the House had, at this advanced stage of the Intercolonial the strongest reason to approve of the principle of this bill, which would operate from 1st June next.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT seconded the motion.

Hon. Mr. BOTSFORD said the bill contained no provision protecting the rights of the contractors. It gave all the powers and duties assigned by the contracts to the Minister of Public Works. The bill should put the contractors in as good a position before that Minister as they occupied hitherto.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT said the effect of the measure would be simply to place the Minister in the position of the Commissioners. The position of the contractors would not be altered in the slightest degree.

Hon. Mr. CAMPBELL thought that public works contractors, having a claim, could under the present bill apply for an arbitration. He assented entirely to the bill, but he would draw attention to the fact that this railway was very nearly completed under the Commissioners appointed by the late Government, and under very considerable adverse criticism. It was said time and again that this was the very worst method of construction that could have been adopted. It was alleged against the late Ministers that, in proceeding as they had, they contemplated abuses, or that such would result, and that they would act so as to secure from the road, great political

influence; that, in fact, they had chosen the last way of obtaining the work required. Now, the road was almost finished, having been built well and economically, and the country was getting a work as good as could have been secured under any other management. As to track, rails, bridges, and so forth, it would compare favorably with any other in the country, and it had been acquired at a price below that of other railways constructed under similar circumstances. It redounded to the credit of the Government that adopted that mode of building it. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. Mr. WARK disputed the theory of the efficient and economical construction of the Intercolonial. From the very beginning there had been difficulties, mistakes and failures. The first differences of opinion arose between the engineer and Commissioners. The engineer proposed to pay for the work by quantity. The Commissioners condemned that plan. Then he said he was not prepared to let the tenders by lumps sum. The Commissioners replied there was no difficulty. They differed again as to iron bridges, the engineer's recommendation of this sort having to be afterwards accepted. The hon. gentleman censured the first report of the Commissioners as sadly lacking in information as to the character of the work wanted, the description of bridges, the width of the track, the depth of foundations, and also read their remarks on the proper method of letting the contracts. The Commissioners were sure the contractors could easily ascertain the nature of the work to be done, and proceed with it satisfactorily. In the face of that, out of the first five contracts let, four had to be abandoned, and the then Government introduced a measure to pay them for the work performed and expenses incurred. All four contracts had to be let over again. Notwithstanding the Commissioners spoke so positively of the impossibility of claims for extras, he would like to know how many of the original contractors had gone through their work at the original prices. Numbers had been allowed to abandon their contracts; Government took them off their hands, and some were being completed in a most extravagant and objectionable way. He believed the railway would cost when finished far beyond what would have been necessary under a different system. More than that, this Government would commit a great mistake if they did not avail themselves of the authority given in the Intercolonial Rail-