

connected with the arrangement under which it was constructed, and a detailed statement of the cost, with the names of the persons employed, their residences at the time of hiring, and the sums paid to them for travelling expenses and wages during their journey; also, copy of the contract for the poles; also, copies of any letters or reports as to the line since its construction disclosing its defects; like papers with reference to the telegraph line from Point Atkinson to New Westminster. Also, all letters and papers with reference to the break in the telegraph cable in British Columbia, its attempted repair, the arrangements for a ferry to replace it and the cost thereof. He said: The information which I have received on this subject, and which induces me to make this motion, is to the effect that tenders were invited by the former resident engineer in British Columbia, for the construction of a line from New Westminster to Yale. Two tenders were received, one at \$26 a mile, and the other at \$28. Subsequently the Inspector of Dominion Telegraphs arrived and went over part of the line, and condemned the system of letting it by tender and determined to adopt another course. In pursuance of that other course, during the winter, the contract was let to one Ryder to furnish the poles, the number being much in excess of the number required, thirty-five poles to the mile I believe, while twenty-seven was the proper rate. Instead of carrying out the arrangement for letting by tender an arrangement was made whereby Mr. Gisborne, jun., and two more persons residing in the Maritime Provinces, were employed and sent all the way out from the east unto the west, at a very great cost to the Administration, to do this work by job, they being hired for a certain time to do this and some other work. The transaction is said to be not satisfactory, pecuniarily or otherwise. The work was very expensive, and while it was to have been done in two months, it took five months. It was unsatisfactory as to the location, in some places it was put up at points where the poles were washed away by high water. Then not merely were the poles placed too close together, but the wire was strung too tight, the result was that it was broken, I am told, in hundreds of places when the frost came. Considerable expense was incurred in repairing the breakage, and this expense will continue until the wire is slackened. The same gang of men was employed to build the line from Point Atkinson to New Westminster, and that also was done much more expensively than was necessary. With reference to the cable, it is said there was considerable mismanagement in the laying of it. It would seem, from a statement I have, as well as from a public statement, that the cable was not laid at the proper time, and that it must have been either badly laid, or there must have been a short supply. It is said that operation is also extremely unsatisfactory. I do not vouch for the accuracy of all these statements, but I give them as they were made to me from, I believe, a reliable authority. I consider they furnish sufficient justification for this motion, and require some explanation.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Of course, I was not aware of the details which the hon. gentleman has just laid before the House. I endeavored to obtain information on the subject of his motion, but unfortunately the officer on whom I relied to give me that information was so ill as to be unable to furnish me with it. The other officer, Mr. Gisborne, was in British Columbia attending to this matter, and could not give the information. As in the case of other public works, there may have been some difficulties in the way. The cable laid in the Straits of Georgia was found to be too short, but the end was buoyed up, and the matter is now being looked into, and I have no doubt that before long a cable will be laid across those straits. With regard to the repairs on the line near New Westminster, the officer there, Mr. Wilson, I think, enjoyed specially the confidence of

Mr. Gisborne, the head of the branch of the department, and when the papers are brought down the hon. gentleman will see that the pay of that officer is small compared with the services he has performed. Of course, I do not know the hon. gentleman's source of information. Persons dissatisfied because they did not obtain employment may have made complaints to his correspondent. But I am very glad the hon. gentleman has given me this opportunity of making this statement, and before the Estimates are passed I hope to be in a position to give him more detailed information which will satisfy him that all possible precautions were taken to save the public money.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIFIC GRAVITY OF COAL OIL.

Mr. BLAKE moved for copies of all correspondence, statements and representations upon which the Government acted in proposing the legislation of 1879 and also the Legislation of 1880, as to the specific gravity of coal oil used for illuminating purposes; and for copies of any correspondence, statements and representations on the subject of the operation of either of the said Acts, and any suggestions received as to the amendment of the present Act in that respect. He said: There are, at least, four ways in which the people of this country have been vexed in regard to their light. There is a duty on crude petroleum, there is a duty on the refined article; and there has recently been a modification of the safety test, with regard to which there is a question whether it was not framed so as to give a further advantage to the producers of Canadian oil over the producers of American oil. The fourth circumstance which affects the price of coal oil is a provision which appears to have slipped into the Statute-book unnoticed. I was not in the House in the Session when it was first enacted. I have looked, however, at our journals and the official debates, and I have found that the resolution on which the Bill of 1879 was introduced and the speech of the then Minister of Inland Revenue, Mr. Baby, had no reference to a prohibition to sell or use for illuminating purposes oil exceeding a certain specific gravity. On the contrary, the report of his speech shows that it was designed to make the test of flashing for the safety of burning oil, and the test of specific gravity is in relation to quality. But it got into the Bill without debate or comment of any kind that I can see. I recollect very well the circumstances attending the measure passed last Session. There was a considerable amount of investigation going on during the Session on the subject of the flash test. A motion was on the paper by the hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Colby) from an early period. There was an indication on the part of the Administration that they were about to propose a modification on that subject, and towards the end of the Session, when it was exceedingly difficult to discuss anything, resolutions were brought forward. These resolutions did not themselves deal with the subject of specific gravity; but in the Bill, which, if I remember rightly, was read the second time, committed and read the third time, in the space of five minutes, a clause was introduced altering the law as to specific gravity. Whereas the Act of 1869 had provided that no oil should be sold with a specific gravity exceeding 807, the law so changed provided that no oil should be sold with a specific gravity exceeding 802. The consequences of that change were extremely serious. First of all, I inquire why illuminating oil is prohibited from being sold if it exceeds a certain specific gravity. From what I have heard in this House, or from the oil refiners themselves, I conclude that the safety of the oil has no relation to the specific gravity. It is a test, I understand, simply of quality, not of safety. Why, then, should we prohibit the public from obtaining an oil, inferior in illuminating quality