

Supply—Hudson Bay Railway

has proved a failure, or a partial failure, or that has proved too costly for the Canadian people. I say that the great difficulty in transportation that we must face and solve is due to allowing ourselves to be stampeded into capital projects of a character such as this without adequate information as to what is really involved.

Mr. MULLINS: Would the hon. member say that we are being stampeded into this project after it has been discussed for thirty-eight years? Does it take more than thirty-eight years to find out whether it is right or not?

Mr. NICHOLSON: It makes no difference whether it is thirty-eight or one hundred and thirty-eight years. It makes no difference to me how many mistakes have been made in the past. I say we should try to reach a point when we will bring these mistakes to an end, and look at these things from the standpoint of plain common sense. The minister in his statement of probable cost, if I understood him correctly, gave figures approximating \$26,000,000 as the amount to which we are committing this country to-night by passing this vote. Of that amount \$6,000,000 is required to put the railway into the condition of a branch line, and \$20,000,000 for a ten-ship port in order that the route may be properly tested out.

Mr. DUNNING: I must protest against these words being put into my mouth. I specifically did not commit the government to a \$20,000,000 port development.

Mr. NICHOLSON: I recognize that the minister said he did not know, but he gave us figures showing a necessary expenditure of \$20,000,000. I appreciate at once that he immediately said I am not going to vouch for these figures. That is one of our difficulties, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DUNNING: My hon. friend is deliberately misinterpreting me.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Mr. Chairman, I must protest. I am not deliberately misquoting anybody.

Mr. DUNNING: I take back the word "deliberately". The hon. member is unintentionally misrepresenting my meaning. I will read the statement again, for the fourth time. In speaking of the port I said that while the figures had the backing of the engineer Mr. McLachlan, for a port development of that size and scale, I was not committing the government to a development on that scale. That is what I said.

[Mr. Nicholson.]

Mr. NICHOLSON: That is exactly what I said. Perhaps the minister will be good enough to tell us what he is committing the government and the Canadian people to as a means of testing out this route. I submit, Mr. Chairman, that we have a right to know that. This business of coming before parliament and saying: Here is the report of an engineer to the effect that this thing is going to cost \$20,000,000 to put this port into a condition so that we can properly test out this route—

Mr. DUNNING: The engineer did not say that; neither did I, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Then what does the engineer say the \$20,000,000 is to be spent for? Why was the \$20,000,000 mentioned?

Mr. DUNNING: In response to a question as to what information I had. Perhaps I had better read it again, although it is already on Hansard. It shows an estimated cost of harbour works at Port Nelson, for ten ships, of 7,000 tons each, all in port at the same time, and allows for a 4,000,000 bushel terminal elevator, which would cost \$3,600,000, out of the \$20,000,000, and to which I specifically refused to commit myself or the government at this stage.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Frankly I can see no purpose in putting these figures on the record at all.

Mr. DUNNING: Then why did the hon. member ask the question?

Mr. NICHOLSON: Has parliament no right to know to what this country is being committed when it passes this estimate?

Mr. DUNNING: My hon. friend is quite right. Then why does he find fault with me for giving the information?

Mr. NICHOLSON: I am not finding fault. I accept the statement of the minister as to the figure he gave, and because I do so, he says I am deliberately misquoting him.

Mr. DUNNING: I withdrew that word.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Then he said I was unintentionally misquoting him. The minister volunteers the information that it will cost \$20,000,000. Now if the engineer has overestimated what the cost is going to be, I submit that this is the first time an engineer has ever overestimated what a work of this character is going to cost the country.

Mr. DUNNING: I did not say that.

Mr. NICHOLSON: The minister read in detail the engineer's figures. It was unnecessary, because as a matter of fact we have the engineer's figures. He gave ten ships of 7,000