

unanimous report of the Dominion land surveyors, and the freely expressed opinion of private individuals who know the country well, unite in showing that the present route is impracticable, and that, so long as it is adhered to, constant or even frequent telegraphic communication with the North-West will be unattainable.

THE ENORMOUS COST.

Unfortunately the cost of the line has been enormous. For construction of the section from Winnipeg to Pelly, 294 miles, Messrs Sifton, Glass & Co., received \$492 per mile for the forest portion and \$189 per mile for the prairie portion. For the Livingstone to Edmonton section, Mr. Fuller received \$213.13 per mile. For maintenance, Messrs. Sifton, Glass & Co., receive \$16 per mile per annum, Mr. Fuller getting a lump sum of \$13,000 per year. In defence of the high rates paid for construction it may be urged that the lowest available tenders were accepted, but this position is not tenable, for it is not doing the late Government an injustice to say that they should not have awarded the contracts at such figures, in face of the fact that, making due allowance for the extra expense involved in carting in wire, provisions &c., for men, even then the cost was far in excess of what has been paid by companies in Canada and the United States for their lines. For the price paid, a first-class line in every respect should have been built, but it is of the cheapest and most useless description, the poles, along the greater portion of the route, being miserable attenuated poplar. First-class wood should have been used and the contractors compelled to transport it for some distance when it was not to be had near at hand. The amount paid for maintenance is generally considered to be excessive, even were the line in constant operation. The Engineer-in-Chief informs me that the contractors are only paid for the time the line is in working order, but as the Department does not appear to have any definite information on this point, nor can it well be expected to when the difficulty of obtaining it is considered, the probability is that very little is deducted from the aggregate subsidy to cover the time when communication is interrupted.

A USELESS LINE.

In 1875, while defending his action in reference to the construction of the line, Mr. Mackenzie said:—

"He felt from the first that it was absolutely indispensable to have telegraphic communication with the various points on the line, in order to prosecute a successful survey, and in order to conduce to the settlement of the North-West Territories, as well as to lay out the line upon which the road should ultimately be built."

"Indispensable" or not, the fact is that this communication has not been had, except at rare intervals, as will be seen by the subjoined examples. Speaking from personal observation in Winnipeg, from early in May until