

like to base any action upon any representations that he might have made. But I assume that Colonel Cantley was, and probably he was, more reliable than my hon. friend; I assume that his letter is correct. I heard it read but I could not distinguish the words and so I do not know what the contents were. I was present during the reading of it, and while I do not know just what it stated, I am assuming that it was correct. But I challenge the building of this or any other railway upon any statement, however convinced the writer may be, unless that writer is in a position in which he is responsible to the people of Canada for the conduct of their railway business. My hon. friends who quote Colonel Cantley to-day took good care that he did not remain to give advice in regard to the railways. They did not trust him.

Mr. COPP: He resigned.

Mr. BAXTER: Well, it is to be hoped that some other members of the board will resign for a similar laudable purpose.

Mr. GRAHAM: He resigned and got out, and the Minister of National Defence kept him out.

Mr. HANSON: He did resign; for once the Secretary of State is right.

Mr. BAXTER: Assuming that the things in Colonel Cantley's letter are correct, he alone cannot be the depository of that information. It must be known to others; it must be a matter of absolute record with the Railway Board; it must be known to Sir Henry Thornton or be under his control. And what I think the people of Canada want to-day with reference to each and every one of these votes is not a swapping of passages from Hansard, is not a reference to people who are not in this House, is not a reference to people who are not the controlling board of the railways, but rather a statement in detail of the cost and the anticipated revenue which will come from the expenditure of public money. We are surely down to the day of business in the matter of our railways, regardless of the political fortunes of any party. I am not going to draw the line even there, however, and say that I would not support an expenditure for a branch line which on the face of it would be a non-paying or an actually losing proposition. I can see, in regard to many of these resolutions, which I shall not debate seriatim, that there are some in connection with which, certain moneys having been already expended, it would be far more wasteful to discontinue operations and so destroy what already exists, when the spending of a comparatively small amount would complete

the work. Then there are other cases, more particularly in the West, where it would be bad policy not to reach out and help to develop the country so as to retain the people who are already there and bring in others to promote the general prosperity. That will be good business, looking to the future. But it should not be a matter of my judgment based upon a bundle of assertions made from all sides of the House; it should be a matter of judgment based upon responsible reports from the responsible people whom the country has put in charge of the railways. And that information up to the present time is absolutely lacking.

The hon. member (Mr. Carroll) read what seemed to be an interesting statement although I could catch only a few words occasionally on this side of the House. I thought I caught some reference to the amount of steel that would be handled. That is precisely the sort of information I want to see in Sir Henry Thornton's report; I should like to have an estimate of the number of tons of steel that will in all probability be transported by such a line, the revenue that will be derived, the cost of transporting, and all contrasted with the existing line. Let us have information of that character. Is that an unreasonable request? We cannot check up the truth or accuracy of that information, but this House and the country can, if the railway board is in existence after the building of the railways. And at that time, if we find that there has been a blunder, we can turn the responsible person out of office. We are more likely to get real information from actual railway men than we are from any number of politicians who during a series of years have been burdening Hansard with hopes, desires, requests and prayers. That is what I want to get down to. I would not for two minutes take the word of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Macdonald) as to the need of the road, the cost of it, or its probable earnings; not that I charge the hon. gentleman with deliberately misrepresenting things, but because I would not believe that he would have in his possession information as accurate and reliable as could be obtained from the railways. Some one will say: He might go out and get it from the railway. Very well, if he does that, it will be all right, in all probability, to let the railway bring the information here. All that I heard to-day was a perfectly nebulous address, such as might have been made before a sewing circle, with reference to the need of the branch lines in Canada. The only thing that distinguishes it from a sewing circle address is the fact