

Mr. JOHN HAGGART. This is the first I have seen of this statement. I have not had an opportunity of looking at it.

Mr. GRAHAM. I have been rushing to get all the information possible, and the reason I am bringing these estimates so early is that in the peculiar position in which I am placed, I want to get them through while my deputy is with me, for the new deputy would not know anything about them.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. So far as that is concerned, this interim report is practically non-existent, because nobody can examine it for the purpose of making any criticism or any recommendation. No one would desire to embarrass the minister under the peculiar circumstances in which he is placed; but as a matter of fact, the construction of the Transcontinental railway is not especially under the charge of the deputy minister, but is under the commission appointed for that purpose; so I would not think that the absence of the deputy minister would make a great deal of difference in that regard. At all events, I think the item had better stand for the present.

Mr. GRAHAM. I have no objection. I placed a copy of this statement on the table of the House.

Item allowed to stand.

Hudson Bay railway—to provide for the survey and location of a line of railway from the Saskatchewan river to the Hudson bay, \$180,000.

Mr. GRAHAM. This item is only to complete the location of the line. Although there is a difference of opinion as to the better harbour, the location of the line for 260 miles from the Pas to Split lake is a common location, no matter which harbour is selected. This item is for the location of the line up to this point. When that is done, we may possibly have the other question settled.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What are the proposals of the government with respect to construction? Is the railroad to be constructed by the department, or is it to be let by contract, or is a charter to be given to some private corporation?

Mr. GRAHAM. I expect to bring down an item for construction in the supplementary estimates, when I hope to be able to give the information which my hon. friend asks for. A bridge is to be constructed across the Saskatchewan at the beginning of the line, which would have to be done whether the work were given to a company or carried on by the government. It would not affect this item, which is merely for the survey and location of the line.

Mr. FOSTER. What is the total cost of the survey?

Mr. GRAHAM.

Mr. LENNOX. Has the minister anything to tell us with reference to letting the contract to Mackenzie and Mann? It is stated in the press that the government is about to let the construction of this railroad to that firm, and that Mr. Mann was down here the day before yesterday. Perhaps the minister would tell us whether that is well founded or not, and how far the negotiations have gone.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Mann was down on some other business. He did not discuss this with me at all. We have no agreement with any one for the construction of this line. It is absolutely an open question, so far as I know.

Mr. SCHAFFNER. Is it the intention to construct a portion of that line this year?

Mr. GRAHAM. It is the intention of the government to start construction, and I hope to give more details when I ask for an appropriation for construction. A bridge might be constructed or a portion of the line, but whatever may be done will only be to save time and not delay the work. If the work be given to a company, whatever be done can be taken into consideration in any arrangement made.

Mr. BARKER. I understood the hon. minister the other day to say that Mr. Armstrong had demonstrated that Nelson harbour was a very superior one. I do not find that to be the case. The remarks of Mr. Armstrong are not based on his own surveys, but on various reports issued by the Department of the Interior and on information supplied by Hudson Bay Company officers. If that is all there is in Mr. Armstrong's report, for which we are paying all this money, I am afraid we are not getting much in return.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Armstrong has made a report since the departmental report of March 31, 1909. He made a later report in a small volume which was laid on the table some weeks ago, and accompanying that report is a chart showing the soundings taken by Mr. Armstrong himself.

Mr. ROCHE. Is it not a fact that the Canadian Northern has a line constructed as far as The Pas, and has not the government an idea of that company undertaking the construction of the road? If not why has the government selected The Pas as the starting point?

Mr. GRAHAM. That seems to be the natural point at which to start. It is the nearest to the existing system and to Hudson bay, and the idea of the government was to make connections from the nearest point to Hudson bay.

Mr. HUGHES. Any other system would have to go near it too.