

It was a serious responsibility for any engineer to assume to recommend that construction should be commenced on the line to Burrard Inlet, without first having exhausted all the sources of inquiry open to us. I felt that we should clearly and unmistakably understand the capabilities and possibilities of the northern region, that we should obtain data to determine if a railway line could be obtained through it, that we should know the character of the route, and that we should possess full information with regard to the climate, soil and capability for settlement, before the Government became irrevocably committed to the large expenditure attendant on the adoption of any route.

It is easy to be understood that, if, subsequent to the construction of the railway on the southern route, it was discovered that a northern line could have been undertaken at a greatly reduced cost, through a country, in respect of soil and climate, suitable for prosperous settlement, a gross and irremediable error would have been committed, possibly ever to be deplored.

Additional northern explorations, therefore, seemed to me to be advisable, whatever the result obtained. Under any circumstances, it was evident that the information gained, even if of negative value, would be important in adding to our positive knowledge of the territory.

In April last, I was notified that the Government had decided, previous to the determination of any route, to make additional examinations of the northern passes and of the country which flanks both sides of the mountains.

These examinations it was proposed so to carry on that the information would be systematically and rapidly gained, that it could at once be acted on and the choice of the location and the commencement of construction no longer delayed.

The extent of territory embraced was the country between the longitude of Edmonton, east of the Rocky Mountains, and Port Simpson, on the Pacific. Port Simpson had already been reported to be an excellent harbor. It was known that a deep-water arm of the sea, named Wark Inlet, some 35 miles in length, extended to the east of Port Simpson, in the direction of the River Skeena; Wark Inlet being separated from the Skeena by a narrow isthmus of no great elevation.