

detailed information already laid before the House, will warrant us in arriving at the conclusion that that estimate is not only a safe one, but that it is really the outside estimate of the amount of money to be paid by the Government. I will now advert to the central or prairie section, and then I have no hesitation in saying that, had we been compelled to come before Parliament this Session with an estimate, I would have been obliged, in the light of the year's experience, to say that in all probability I would have to increase that estimate. The hon. gentleman will see that, in the first place, it was supposed by my hon. predecessor that it was next to impossible to obtain the construction of a line in the direction that we are taking to the south of Lake Manitoba, and that the ravines and gulleys to be crossed were of a character to make it next to impossible to go in that direction without a very great cost. I think the hon. gentleman stated, more than once to the House, that by diverting the line to the south of Lake Manitoba we would not only increase the distance some thirty miles, but increase the cost to the country by \$1,000,000.

Mr. MACKENZIE. That was the engineer's estimate.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I took what I supposed was a better means of forming a judgment than any that the hon. gentleman had, and that was to place 200 miles under contract.

Mr. MACKENZIE. Of the easiest part.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I think that, as far as the section of 100 miles is concerned, the report of Mr. Marcus Smith, who had made the location of that section, went to indicate that it was a fair sample of the work to be constructed. The hon. gentleman is, however, correct in saying that, taking the 200 miles together, it would be very much easier than the remainder of the line. We had the assurance of the engineer that we could get a favourable line in that direction, a line, at all events, if not so good in point of grades as that which the hon. gentleman had located by the narrows of Lake Manitoba, still one that would serve as a colonization road. I have already stated to the House that our intention was, finding ourselves compelled to go on with the construction of this road as a Government work, to go out upon the prairie and to open up the country with the cheapest description of road we could obtain. I dare say the House will remember the stringent criticism, and some of it well founded, to which my predecessor subjected that proposal, and he showed the House that there was a large amount of work to be done on the section of 100 miles, and he practically stated to the House that he did not believe it was possible for that work to be accomplished for anything like the figures for which the road was contracted for. This has proved to be correct, and the Government felt bound to offer this by competition, requiring that parties should, in the first place, deposit a cheque of \$25,000, I think, as the evidence of their *bona fides*, and, in the second place, five per cent. upon the amount of the contract. When these stipulations were completed, the Government were obliged, of course, to place the work under contract; the result has been to satisfy me that it was utterly impossible for them to accomplish the construction of the work at anything like the figures they had undertaken. They were unable to carry the work forward, and the contract, as the hon. gentleman knows, has been cancelled. If I had come back to Parliament this year in the position in which I stood last year, asking for public money to construct this as a Government work, it would have been my duty to revise my estimate for the central section. I have no hesitation in saying that while we should have been able, with the new light we have obtained, to reduce largely the cost of the construction of the line between Thunder Bay and Red River, on the other hand, I should have been obliged frankly to state to the House that, low as was the character of the

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central section of the road—a simple colonization road, as I have admitted again and again to the House—it was necessary for me to ask for a very considerable increased estimate on that portion of road. It was not necessary, however, that I should deal with that branch of the question, because, under the contract which has been laid on the Table of the House, all the risk, all the responsibility, and all the cost connected with the construction of that portion devolve upon the Company with whom the contract was made. The fullest possible information that I have been able to supply from the data within my possession, has been given to the House; but whatever yet remains will be supplied. I make these explanations in reply to the very lengthened address of the hon. gentleman, and I must express my regret that he has not been more easily satisfied than he has with the information I have submitted. I will endeavor, however, to supplement that with such further information as the department can supply, and as may be made available for the present discussion. But if this resolution is allowed to pass in its present form, it must be with the proviso the hon. gentleman has himself made; that we shall furnish all the data we can without causing any further delay.

Mr. McLENNAN. I have listened with great pleasure to the statements made by the hon. leader of the Opposition. Any new light we can obtain on this question is highly acceptable. I am not disposed to harp at any conditions that are attached to an enquiry of this kind, but, perhaps, the House will agree with me, that the skill and ingenuity of the hon. leader of the Opposition was very clearly marked in the final generous proposition which he threw across the floor at my hon. friend the Minister of Railways. It was to the effect that these enquiries were not made with the view of discussing any change of policy, but of pointing out the importance of ascertaining—what? The means by which a charge might possibly be formulated. I have listened with still greater pleasure to the explanations of the hon. Minister of Railways, and I think it must be very gratifying to this House that at every stage of this discussion, in every new statement, every new estimate made, we find that we can build the road more cheaply than we had thought before, and without any deterioration in the character of the road. So that magnificent rule of three which has been formulated so ingeniously nearly produces nothing. We continue to be assured that we shall have a first-class railway upon the basis of any or all of the estimates which are put before us. I am glad to hear from the hon. Minister, that he is in hopes of coming before us at a later stage with still further reduced estimates, and I think the House and the country will forgive him for any length he chooses to go in that direction, within the condition that he will give us a good road.

Mr. BLAKE. It is extraordinary with what different ears we hear on the two sides of this House. I certainly did not hear the hon. Minister declaring, except with reference to the line between Red River and Thunder Bay, that he was about to give us a line not inferior in character to that which has been formerly projected. If the hon. member does intend to say that the other sections to be constructed are to be equal in character to those which, in earlier days had been projected, and had been the standard of construction up to that time, I shall be very glad to know it. But that would be in contradiction of everything the Minister of Railways has written and stated on that subject to this moment. The member for Glengarry (Mr. McLennan) believes that he heard him say that this reduction in the cost was to be effected without alteration in the character of the road. Both the Minister's own statement last Session, his letters to the engineer, and the estimate of the engineer, all point to alterations, impairing the character of the road. I except the portion from Thunder Bay to Selkirk, upon which the Minister says he will be able to keep up the