

When I entered on my duties it was not for me to assume that the covenant with British Columbia, the words uttered by the Governor General from the Throne, the repeated expressions of the leaders of the Government, in Parliament and out of Parliament, were without meaning. I was bound to take them literally and do the best I could. As a public servant with an important trust thrown upon me, I felt it my imperative duty to leave nothing undone on my part to carry out the terms as they were set forth.

It is easy for men, sitting on a Commission ten years after the duty to solve the problem was thrown upon me, to say that the solution was easy, and to add that some other way than that taken would have been better and cheaper. They entirely overlook the fact that I was obliged to adapt myself to a state of things which I found existing at the period when the work was first conceived. Then but little positive information was available and every fact, in order to be correctly known, had to be sought out.

There were not a sufficient number of thoroughly efficient and practical men in the country to aid me in carrying out the work of preliminary explorations in what might be deemed the best way. There were not the same number of efficient assistants as now. The few capable men in the country could not be spared from the Intercolonial Railway and other public works then in progress. Ten years' experience has been gained, and many excellent young engineers have been trained or completed their training since the time in question.

I could only take the material available and make the best of it. I was called upon to do a work requiring a great number of highly skilled men when they could not be had, and, in consequence, I was obliged to adopt means to perform the service largely by partially skilled men. It was not a question of money, it was a question of men. The Government would not have thanked me to have informed them that it would be better to wait until a sufficient number of the proper kind of engineering assistants came to the country or were trained in the country. By so doing I would have been laughed at, and the proposition scouted had I urged that some saving might be effected by waiting. I was placed in the position of a general during an emergency who had no reserve of veterans to draw upon, and who, at short notice, had to raise a force for a campaign. Long after the battle is fought and won, wiseacres might argue that the battle cost too much; that it ought to have been fought by half the number of trained soldiers in another way altogether.

The whole of the judgment passed upon me by the Commission seems to turn upon the difference of cost between two kinds of surveys. My evidence and my instructions, which I read to them, establishes that I adopted both kinds of operations, separately and combined, wherever and whenever it was desirable and possible. It is perfectly true that my plans sometimes miscarried; I disclaim all pretensions to infallibility or any extraordinary degree of foresight, but I think I am justified in saying that failure was not always due to the plans laid down, it was sometimes due to the men placed under me, to carry them out, and frequently to causes beyond the control of any person. The question of this or that kind of survey was, at the time, one of expediency, and really was dictated by the circumstances of the hour. The Commission now view it by the light of all our present information, which the labor of years has furnished. Long after the work is done it is impossible to judge of the expediency of any particular survey, or to explain all the conditions by which we were governed. We were seeking to gain facts, we had a wilderness to operate upon, and for a time we were working in the dark. I do not pretend that, in that gigantic work, our labor was wholly free from miscalculation, but I can honestly say we acted with deliberation, and did our best under every circumstance.

CHARGE No. 2.

(Muskeg Material.)

The Commission mete out severe censure on the muskeg question, as the following extracts indicate:—