

Mr. SPEAKER. I presume the hon. gentleman does not propose to discuss the Bill at this present time.

Mr. SPROULE. If you will first allow me to commence the discussion of the Bill, I shall then be happy to be called to order.

Mr. SPEAKER. I judged that the hon. gentleman was coming very close to a discussion of the Bill in the latter remarks he made.

Mr. SPROULE. I mentioned the Bill as several speakers before me have done, and I assume I have a perfect right to do so, without discussing the principles of the Bill. I am merely referring to the Bill as a reason why the government do not fill the vacant portfolio, and I am asking them to fill it so that the people may have a chance to express their opinion of it. When that is done we will say that the government are acting according to the principles of constitutional government. I need not say anything with regard to another portfolio that has been practically vacant for a long time; while we are voting large sums of money for that department to spend we are not carrying out the principles of constitutional government both during this session and last session. Until the government bring themselves in accord with the principles of constitutional government as carried out in Great Britain, we are justified in drawing their attention from time to time to their failure to do so, and in asking them to put themselves in accord with these principles which they have always declared they are desirous of upholding.

Motion agreed to, and House went into Committee of Supply.

National Transcontinental Railway—surveys, construction and other expenses, \$1,328,500.

Hon. H. R. EMMERSON (Minister of Railways and Canals). I am asking for this money to meet the necessary expenses in connection with the work of the National Transcontinental Railway Commission. The details of that sum are as follows: For salaries of commissioners and headquarters staff, \$100,000; for headquarters rental, \$13,500; head office, stationery, furniture, light, telephone, telegrams, travelling, incidental and unforeseen expenses, \$25,000; for wages of men in connection with the different survey parties, \$600,000; head office, district and divisional engineers' salaries, \$100,000; supplies and commissariat, \$425,000; outfit and instruments, \$20,000; freight and travelling expenses of engineers and transport of men, \$45,000. These sums make up the total.

Mr. FOSTER. Now suppose we raise the question, first, a very important one, before any of this money is voted, as to what information this House is going to get. We have tried on several occasions

to get it, but have not been able to. The thing has been thrown backwards and forwards like a rubber ball. We have incurred a large expense, and we are now to face a million and a third, and we have not a scintilla of information as to what this commission has done, or the results of its labours, if it has done anything. If it has not done anything it has not justified its existence because the expense heretofore has been very great. If it has done anything we want a complete statement placed before the House as to what it is that it has done. We have debated the question casually time and again and it has been called to the attention of the right hon. Prime Minister and also the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals as to the fact that information does get out, but it does not get out to the members of the House of Commons and the country, because there is no medium of communication between that commission and this House. We would like to have this matter settled first before we vote any money.

Mr. EMMERSON. The commission is constituted under the Act of this parliament and it has certain work to do. It is to be presumed that it is attending to its duties. Now, until it has accomplished certain work, until the work is completed, there can be nothing to report. For instance, the presumption is that in the first instance it will have to look after the surveys. It is to have a road surveyed over the whole route. It will be taken for granted that that will take a certain time, and it will be taken for granted that there are certain preliminary surveys to be made. Now, until there is something to report, until it has the work completed which will enable it to lay before the Governor in Council a statement of the result, we could not naturally expect that the information would be placed before the members of this House. We must not anticipate too much. My hon. friend, I think, shows too much anxiety for this information. The information cannot be in existence. It is true that the general statement may be published in the press that the surveyors are meeting with success in finding a route, but until the finished work of the survey is placed before the Governor in Council it would not naturally be placed on the table of the House. My hon. friend, I think, has become somewhat involved as to the question of the means of communication between the commission and this House. There is no question as to the medium of communication. There was a question however as to the medium of communication between the Railway Commission, another and an entirely different commission, and this House. The question was as to whether the Department of Railways and Canals had any connection with that commission or any control over it. On this the terms of the Act seem to be silent. There is an implication in certain of the sections as