

many interviews which I had with their officers, was that they could not get the necessary labour.

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR: Was that recently?

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: That was before their policy for the current year was laid down.

Hon. Mr. GIRROIR: But it was during this year?

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: During this year. The same policy was laid down by the National Railways. I went to the minister, I went to the deputy minister; I went wherever I thought I might succeed in getting another mile of railway built for the Prairie Provinces and in every case I was told that they were ready to build to the extent for which they could get labour and materials. The problem of getting materials is now, I understand, happily solved. There is no difficulty now in getting steel rails; at least, so I am advised. So the only difficulty would be in obtaining the labour required for the building of the road. I am opposed to diverting to the building of the ordinary type of highway that labour which could be, in my opinion, very much more profitably employed, in the western provinces in any event, in the building of railways or in work on the farm.

I have many other objections to this measure I do not want to discuss here, and since I have had the honour of a seat in this House I have never discussed, any question of provincial politics; but I have some knowledge of the question of road-building as it concerns the province of Saskatchewan. At my instigation a commission was appointed in that province for the purpose of investigating the building of highways. I am not going to discuss on the floor of this House the issues raised in that investigation, or the findings of the commission; but I will venture to say that I have complete first-hand information as to the way in which highways are built in the province of Saskatchewan. We have here a Government that is professedly non-political; that is, there are in it no party politics. I may be putting it too strongly. At any rate, the system of patronage has been absolutely abolished. Nobody contends that in any of the provinces of Canada, whether they be controlled by the Conservatives or by the Liberals, party patronage no longer prevails. There has been no declaration of intention on the part of any of the provinces to depart from

that time-honoured system. They intend to continue doing as they have done in the past. It is well known that in the western provinces, or in some of them—I do not want to generalize too much, and I will speak of my own province, for I do know of that—in the province of Saskatchewan the road construction system is a part of the party machine. The same may be just as true of the province of Ontario, but I have no knowledge of it; therefore I make no assertion. That is all I desire to say with reference to the party aspect of this question.

The Federal Government should not put into the hands of any province a club with which to beat them in Dominion elections. I am absolutely free to say that. Therefore, although this proposed measure has been very much improved by the amendment introduced by the right honourable the Prime Minister, yet it puts the entire expenditure of these Federal moneys in the hands of the local authorities. If Dominion moneys are to be spent in the building of roads, I want the Federal Government to spend them. I want the Federal Government to be responsible for the expenditure of all Federal money, whether for roads or otherwise.

I am not going to deal at any length with the constitutional question, but I desire to make just one reference to it. When the former Highways Bill was under consideration, I had the honour of a seat in the Saskatchewan Legislature. In that assembly it was discussed at considerable length, and a resolution on the subject was introduced. If my memory serves me, a Bill of Rights was drafted by the Attorney General of Saskatchewan, asserting and vindicating the provincial rights of Saskatchewan in connection with the building of roads and the expenditure of money for that purpose. It declared that the proposed Federal measure was in contravention of the British North America Act and of provincial rights, and was sent to the Secretary of State or the Governor General in Council. So far did we go in Saskatchewan on this question. So I submit that if it is desired to grant this appropriation, we should grant it with our eyes open.

It has not been shown that the local governments cannot devote an adequate amount of money to the building of such roads as they find it necessary to build. Before granting them money for this purpose we ought first to be absolutely satisfied that they cannot do so, and I at least am not satisfied of that. I have seen no