

railroad construction to connect the Coast with Kootenay by a direct line, or indeed, any other railroad proposition of intrinsic value as an aid to the development of British Columbia. The railroad policy thus represented is exactly what the people of British Columbia endorsed at the general election of last year, and there is not the slightest doubt that the predominant public opinion of the Province remains in this respect the same.

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THE FIGHT FOR GRANTS UNEARNED.

The debate on the Railroad Aid Repeal Bill introduced by the Hon. Mr. Martin, is proceeding in the Provincial Legislature as we write. But we have no doubt that the division on the second reading of the measure will endorse the action of the Government in withdrawing the conditional offers of its predecessor to grant \$4,000 a mile in aid of the construction of a section on the intended route of the British Pacific Railroad scheme and \$4,000 a mile in aid of a line of rail from English Bluff to Penticton plus an impracticable railroad ferry service across the wide and often stormy Gulf which parts Vancouver Island from the Mainland. There is no great weight in the opposition to the repeal of the British Pacific subsidy, but a big fight is being made to secure for the charterers of the other scheme—usually known as the Vancouver, Victoria & Eastern Railroad, the control of a conditional grant of \$4,000 a mile, backed by which, and as the promoters fondly hope, also by a Dominion subsidy, not yet gained, they may dispose of their charter to considerable advantage, and thus reap a goodly profit at the expense of British Columbia and Canada.

The charterers in question base their opposition to a repeal of the acts enabling certain Provincial subsidies to be granted, on the fact that although no real construction work has been done, some tentative preliminary surveying was prosecuted some time since at no great aggregate cost, a very loose sort of agreement—clearly “ultra vires” and unsanctioned by the enabling acts—having also been made between the late Provincial Government and themselves. The agreement being ultra vires and the surveying and other small expenditure incurred not meeting the requirements of the enabling legislation, the present Provincial Government is clearly within its legal and moral rights, in refusing to grant a subsidy, merely to make profits for intending charter vendors who have, after a long period of opportunity, failed to cause their railroad project to materialise and thus in anywise benefit the Province.

A well fed contingent of legal and other lobbyists has been engaged by the promoters of the Vancouver, Victoria & Eastern project to bolster up their big demand upon the Province and secure the support for their cause of possibly wavering members of the Legislature.

Yet we apprehend that a majority of the members of the Provincial House will nevertheless stand firm by the Government in its resolve to defend British Columbia from an unjustified demand for a big dole of public money, a very large part of which would assuredly, if granted, be divided amongst a small coterie of railroad charter vendors. By such preventive action the Province will be saved from borrowing nearly a million dollars in aid of a railroad extension, which if practicable and profitable, can assuredly be obtained from other and stronger hands than those of the would-be charter transferors of the Vancouver, Victoria & Eastern project.

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ABOLITION OF THE SUBSIDIES.

Much feeling exists in Government circles over the proposition to abolish the railway subsidies. In sharp contrast to this measure is that extending the land subsidy to the Columbia & Western. The present government party when in opposition never grew tired of condemning this grant, and they expressed great gratification when it was proposed to substitute a bonus of \$4,000 a mile for it. Under the terms of the original act it would be impossible for the Canadian Pacific, which is building the road, to earn the subsidy within the time limited, and so an additional year has been given them. To this we make no objection. It is only keeping good faith with the company to extend its rights in this regard until the completion of the road. Doubtless the company will take the land, and as this paper supported the land grant in the first instance, it raises no objection to its being given now. The opposition party can easily justify their course in not opposing the extension of the time, but the Government supporters cannot.

The point that seems to admit of no reasonable explanation is how the Government supporters can justify, even to themselves, the extension of the subsidy in this case and the abolition of it in the others. We say justify to ourselves, for it goes without saying that they cannot justify it to the country. It is true that the Canadian Pacific is actively engaged in the construction of a portion of the Columbia & Western; but it is also true that respon-