

which is proposed in this Bill. It is the only way in which we could take it over. Whatever may be done in the future in connection with this road is being allowed to stand, and what we are doing to-day is just for this particular time, because we could not prorogue this House without making provision in some form for the Canadian Northern, or that system would have gone into liquidation. Every school-boy from the country knows that. Therefore I say we could not let it go. I would ask any man who will speak on this subject, to suggest some other better way in which provision could be made than the one we have adopted. In adopting this plan, the Government has not decided for the future at all, but simply for the time being; and the Government which comes in and takes charge of affairs after the election, which must take place very soon, would have the opportunity and the responsibility of settling a policy and arranging a way by which this can be carried out. I do not think there could be anything fairer or more honest done in connection with such a large and important problem, and one in which this country is so much interested. Canada is interested doubly and trebly in having this road continued for the benefit of the people of Canada, the plain people, who are entitled to the consideration of this Parliament; because not only has the Dominion advanced money and granted land to the Canadian Northern system, but every province in the Dominion is involved, and municipalities from one end of the Dominion to the other are interested, many of them having given free right of way for the construction of this road through their lands. But I believe that the people of this country are getting the very best consideration of this Parliament under this Bill which we are about to put through.

Hon. W. C. EDWARDS: I feel compelled to say a few words on this subject. Perhaps I occupy a position different from that of several members who sit here, and if the conclusions at which I arrive may be somewhat divergent from those of the honourable gentlemen with whom I generally co-operate, I believe I shall be able to give fairly good reasons for them. One thing I wish to say at once that the matter to which I have referred does not in the slightest degree affect my judgment on this question, as I believe that my conclusions are in the best interest of the people of Canada, regardless of any institution whatsoever.

The question with which we are unfortunately confronted is probably the most difficult which Canada has ever experienced excepting that of the great war in which she is now engaged. There is no question of doubt whatever that Canada has overbuilt in railways, and the great question now is, what are we going to do in the matter? My judgment is that there should be a great limitation of existing lines. Canada has duplicated her railway building in a manner not at all in the interests of the country, but in a such way as very seriously to overburden the present and perhaps the future of the country. Each party is disposed to blame the other for the present condition. So far as I am concerned, I blame the people of Canada themselves; they far overestimated their possibilities. If the governments of Canada had known the country east of the Great Lakes as I know it—for I do know it—those railroads, or a great portion of them, never would have been built. Honourable gentlemen may think that I do not speak with any authority as to knowledge of the country; but my firm has explored almost the entire country from Behring Strait to the Albany river. My firm spent three winters and a large amount of money in exploring Labrador and Ungava, supposing of course that it belonged to Newfoundland, though we found ultimately that it belonged largely to the province of Quebec. We have explored every river from Behring strait to this end of the island of Anticosti. From that portion to the Rouge river we know thoroughly what the country is, though we have not made an actual exploration of it. From that portion to the Albany river we have explored the entire country; and I want to show you briefly how the people of Canada are misled as to a great part of its possessions, or supposed possessions, and also to show you something of the value of government reports on which our various Governments act. The Dominion Government explored the Albany river for mineral purposes, and at the same time reported that there was a vast amount of spruce and other timber suitable for pulpwood purposes. The Ontario Government made a special survey of that country, and the report is in the archives of the province of Ontario, to the effect that there are 300,000,000 cords of pulpwood upon that river. Just figure what that means when I tell you that a 100-ton pulp mill requires some 30,000 tons of pulpwood annually for its operations. Upon reading the report of the