

Sir THOMAS WHITE: Possibly the shipping, too, after a time, but that question does not immediately arise. Here the Government of Canada has taken over an immense railway system, and we will add to it. But let us take a pride in it, and try to make a success of it.

Mr. ANDREW ROSS McMASTER (Brome): I will not, I hope, be improperly conducting myself if I propose to bring back the minds and thoughts of the members of this House to the question under discussion, which is not one of public or private ownership, but that of Parliamentary control as distinguished from corporate control. The Acting Prime Minister has so vociferously protested his belief in public ownership that we might think he was a recent convert to the principle, because we have heard of the zeal of the apostate, and perhaps it is possible that the minister is an apostate to the principle of private ownership which he held before.

Now I would submit, in order that we may regard this matter in a calm way, that the question of public or private ownership is not one on which almost religious fervour need be displayed. Is it not rather a question of business? I think it is, and I propose to deal with it on that plane. I am always, Mr. Speaker, most interested in anything the Acting Prime Minister says. I always listen to him with the gravest and most careful attention; and I could not help discerning a strong contrast in what he said to-day as compared to what he said some time ago in connection with the proposal advanced by the hon. member for Shelburne and Queens (Mr. Fielding). That hon. gentleman, the other night when this Bill was under consideration in Committee, made precisely the same suggestion as he made this afternoon. And what was the attitude of the Acting Prime Minister on that occasion? Rising in his seat and turning with all that courteous graciousness with which he is endowed, he said to the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fielding): "What you say, Sir, is worthy of the deepest consideration. I myself am afraid it is impracticable, but I will consult with the officers of the Government and see whether it would not be in the public interest to meet your views." To-day the same proposal is laid before the House, and what does the Acting Prime Minister say? He declares: This is an unfair suggestion, or an unfair speech, or an unfair argument—this is a specious argument. Why the reason for the change? The change from courtesy, the change from the

most kindly consideration to somewhat abrupt negation, is due to the few words dropped by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fielding). He, alas! said, perhaps not altogether with enthusiasm, that the conduct of these railways was going to be handed over to a group of gentlemen who live in and about Toronto. Is it an aspersion on the Acting Prime Minister that the gentlemen who form the board of management of these railways come from Toronto? I think not. But what caused the heat on the part of my hon. friend (Sir Thomas White)? I will tell the House. It is because the Acting Prime Minister saw in the words of the member for Shelburne and Queens what might be construed into a statement that what the Canadian people did not like about this Bill was that they felt afraid that it was the turning back of the Canadian Northern into the hands of the Mackenzie and Mann group. That was what caused the sudden change in the demeanour of the Acting Prime Minister. That hon. gentleman has declared, and I say, Amen to his statement, that if we are to have a successful experiment in public ownership, the control of the railways must be placed in the hands of those in whom the Canadian people have confidence. The member for Shelburne and Queens has stated that the public ownership proposal contained in this Bill suffers from two handicaps. I say that it suffers from a third handicap—the handicap that the people of Canada believe the Mackenzie and Mann interests are far too closely in touch with the present proposal.

Mr. J. H. BURNHAM (Peterborough West): What alternative to the Bill does the hon. gentleman propose?

Mr. McMASTER: I am not going to answer that question because it does not bear on the issue which is before us at present. The people of Canada have viewed with a feeling of distrust and dislike the fact that when the Acting Minister of Justice—for whom as a lawyer I have great respect—was conducting this Bill through the House he had seated beside him one of the lesser luminaries of that constellation of legal lights which clustered for years around Mackenzie and Mann. Not only that, but he told us that the Bill had been drafted by what I might call the sun of that system of legal lights, Mr. Zebulon A. Lash. These gentlemen are lawyers for whom all Canadian lawyers have great respect. But we would prefer that Government ownership of this great system started without such apparent close connection be-