

I have said that I personally have not seen the plans of these terminals. The very first moment that I learned of these plans being deposited was when I was informed of the fact by my deputy minister, who asked me if any one would be allowed to see them. I said no, certainly not, that on the contrary they should be placed under seal, and that no one should be allowed access to them either in the department or out of it. My hon. friend says that copies of these plans have gone out from the department. I wish to characterize that statement as absolutely unfounded in fact. If there are such plans in circulation, they do not come from the Department of Railways and Canals. I have too much confidence in the deputy minister and the officers of that department to believe for a moment that my instructions were not very closely observed, and I am satisfied that no one has been permitted to see these plans. I know personally that one day when I was in the department a prominent representative of a railway corporation in this Dominion came to me and asked to see these plans, and he will bear testimony to the fact that I said it was impossible for any one to see them and that he could not see them. No doubt my hon. friend made the statement he did in good faith. Possibly it may be true that there are some plans in circulation. If there are, they may have come from the corporation that prepared them, but certainly that any such came from the Department of Railways and Canals, I absolutely deny, and I base my denial on my confidence in my deputy minister and officials. I am confident that they would not permit anything of the kind, and I am satisfied that these plans are still under seal in accord with my instructions.

Mr. HAGGART. The extraordinary part of this matter is that these plans should be kept secret. Under the old Act of parliament the depositing of the plans was simply a mechanical act, the same as filing them in the registry office or filing the plans of a railway for the purpose of incorporation. These plans were afterwards filed in the different counties through which the railway was to run. Why the plans in question should be kept under seal is most astonishing. Why are they not open to the public? Why it should not be made public that this road would pass through a particular town or portion of the country, is something I do not understand. The last amendment to the Act of Parliament was simply to make the department or the government responsible for the character of the road which was obtaining government assistance, so that the government might see that the gradients and curvatures and everything else were up to the requirements of the contract. But when a railway company deposits its plans in the department, I cannot possibly understand why the public should not have access to them. As to the fact of these plans having

Mr. EMMERSON.

been made public, I was informed by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Boyce) that to his knowledge—and of course I am not holding the minister at all responsible but accept his statement as made in perfect good faith—parties have had access to the plans in the department and know exactly where these roads are to be located.

Mr. EMMERSON. They know more than I do.

Mr. HAGGART. I am not accusing the hon. minister. I believe that he spoke exactly what he considered to be the fact, but I believe that the facts, from the information given by my hon. friend, are different from what the hon. minister believes them to be. If that be so, the parties who disregarded the minister's instructions should be dismissed.

Mr. EMMERSON. You can rest assured of that.

Mr. HAGGART. But what I arose particularly to protest against is that when plans or other documents giving the location, character, gradients and all the other principal requisites of a railway are filed in the department, they should be looked upon as secret papers and kept from the public until the minister has given them his approval.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The question before the House is this: The plans have been filed for approval of a station ground at Fort William. The minister thought proper, rightly or wrongly, to have these plans kept secret until such time as the location is approved of. Some time ago my hon. friend from Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Boyce) asked to have these papers communicated to the House and his request was refused. That refusal was in accord with the decision of the Minister of Railways and Canals that until the plans were approved it was advisable in the public interest that they should not be made public. Whether that decision was right or wrong is a question open for discussion. But the charge is made these instructions of the minister were disobeyed and that these plans have gone out by the back door to some interested parties. This is a very serious charge.

Mr. FOSTER. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. If my hon. friend has information on which to base a charge of that kind, it is his duty to give it to the House so that it may be investigated. If his statement be true, it is in the interest of the government and the country that those who are the culprits should be known and punished, for it would be intolerable that such dereliction of duty should be allowed to go unchecked.

Mr. BOYCE. I may say in reply to the right hon. gentleman that so far as the information given me is concerned, I do not