

I believe I am correct in saying that a motion made by the member for Northumberland to have this matter investigated before a sub-committee was voted down by the Government, and that being the case, I think that now those statements have been made on the floor of the House, the House is bound to order an investigation. With respect to some of the other statements that have been made, I would desire to call the attention of the Minister of Public Works to this very important fact. It is quite true I have no doubt that in past years a great number of railway charters may have been conceded to members of this House. But—and this makes all the difference—it was before it was the policy of the Government, formally announced and declared, to aid those railway companies by gifts of money or land from the public resources. And that I say is what makes all the difference between the cases which have come up within the last few years, after that policy was adopted by the Government, and former proceedings in this House. Were there no public interests involved, were there no grants of public money, were there no land grants to those railway enterprises, I do not know that we should condemn very severely the practice of hon. gentlemen taking an interest in those roads. But what I say is this, that this particular instance shows in the clearest light the extremely vicious nature of the practice which has grown up amongst us. So soon as the Government began to give grants from the public Treasury, began to give grants of land from the public domain to railway companies, then, according to every principle of equity and natural justice members of this House being trustees of the people ought to have kept themselves entirely aloof from such enterprises. That is the doctrine which I think will commend itself to every unprejudiced man and mind throughout the Dominion. At this very moment there is an Act on our Statute-books which forbids members of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company from being members of this House on the simple ground that we gave large grants of money and land to that railway, and by implication we ought equally to deny to hon. gentlemen in this House, and more particularly I think to hon. members supporting the Government, the right of becoming members of railway corporations which are applicants for or which may expect to receive large donations from the public chest. The hon. Minister of Public Works alluded to the case of the Manitoba and South-Western Railways. He said, and he said correctly enough, that those railways had received grants of land on similar conditions, but he ought to have told the House that those two railways to which he alluded had expended large sums of money, had built a considerable number of miles of railway in each case, and were I think in actual running operation as far as the end of the track before the Government made that concession. The truth is, as the hon. gentleman who last spoke said, that there are certain companies which have only a chance to build the railway; and those companies which put no money into the enterprise and do not propose to put money into it, but merely design to do the best they can, which I suppose means to make the most profit they can out of the enterprise, are very dubious objects for legislative assistance, and in every case it is a very doubtful thing that members of the House should connect themselves with such enterprises. I can conceive nothing which is more certain to destroy the independence of any member of this House than that he should be a promoter of railway enterprises which can make no way whatever without receiving subsidies in money or lands from the Government. And such was emphatically, according to the testimony of the last speaker, the position of this particular railway company. It had, as he correctly said, no chance whatever, except by aid of the 6,400 acres of land per mile of building the railway, except by virtue of a Government grant, it had no way of

making a profit for its promoters, that I can see—unless they were prepared to put their hands in their pocket and spend a considerable sum of their own money—other than by in one shape or other sell out the charter. The House will do well to recollect that the granting of a railway charter, which is in all cases a sort of a monopoly, is a very important thing. If you give to any particular company, corporation or body of men, with a view to open a large tract of country, a railway charter running for one, two or three years as the case may be, and if parties in that country are desirous of causing this railway to be carried out, and if they find a wild cat company standing in the way, if they find that men of no means or resources, or men who are not going to put in their means or resources into its construction, stand there with the power to keep back that tract of country for several years together, everybody knows that nothing has been more common in past railway history, nothing is likely to be more common, than for those persons who are interested in promoting those enterprises to have to pay out large sums by way of black mail to the parties who have possession of the charters, for leave to go on and build the railway. The real objection to allowing men of straw or companies of straw to get possession of the charters is this: That they will not part, as the hon. gentleman who just spoke correctly enough mentioned, with their power, their claim, their right to the charter, and consequently, before the railway is constructed, the usual result is that a large sum of money, which ought to have gone to construct the railway, has to be paid to those parties for leave to build the railway; and there is reason, I fear, to suspect that something of this kind was in danger of occurring in this instance. The member for West Toronto (Mr. Beaty) himself admitted that such a thing was possible, and he also stated that in his judgment such a thing was wrong. He told the House, if I remember him correctly, that he could have sold the charter, although he intimated that he had no intention of doing it, but he admitted it was quite possible that this charter had a money value, that it was quite possible for him and others, having got possession of it to dispose of it, and it is quite apparent from the statements made by the Ministers themselves that these gentlemen had of their own resources no means whatever to go on with the construction of the road. They depended wholly and entirely on the Government grant. And now I think there are two conclusions, and two only, which should be drawn from this. One is, that since the Government had chosen to make it a part of their policy to make grants of land and money to railways—under such circumstances no members of Parliament ought to be allowed to meddle and dabble in these things at all; and the second, I think, is, that particularly after the disclosures which have occurred it becomes the duty of the Government to see to it that for the future railway charters shall not be given without full precautions being taken in the general public interest, to see that the parties who get these charters are men of substance and able to proceed with their road. Now I am not disposed at this moment to complicate the question by discussing the best mode of producing this result, but I say that in the minds of the public this whole course of trafficking in railway charters is becoming a crying scandal. I will not venture to say of my own knowledge how many members of this House may be concerned in these matters, but I do say that it is a matter of public notoriety, that meets one at every street corner, that there are members of this House who are supposed, and I fear with too great reason, to be making a regular matter of business of procuring charters and disposing of them to the best bidders for what they will bring. I can conceive of no practice more degrading or dishonoring to Parliament, or likely to do more mischief to the body politic than such acts; and if instead of fifty miles to be constructed