

any other portion of the Intercolonial Railway, and in the near future will do a good deal better, besides the direct advantages which it gives to the country through which it passes. We have to consider all these circumstances, and when we say, if we do make up our minds, that the Intercolonial Railway and the other Government railways are not to be considered as political roads any longer—and I agree to that in the sense that politics should not enter into their management—they will never cease, if I can have any voice in preventing it, they must continue to be political in so far as to respect the principles laid down and understood when the compact was made which united the provinces and resulted in the railway being constructed. Short of that, I say as one member of the Administration to the hon. member for Albert (Mr. Weldon): let us see where the difficulty lies. Let us not be led away by any charm arising from a comparison of figures from foreign countries in which the circumstances are as widely different as things can possibly be. Let us ascertain where the difficulty lies. If it lies in the fact that the Intercolonial Railway carries a great amount of traffic over a long route, built under the circumstances which the hon. gentleman has detailed to the House, built partly under pressure from the Imperial Government in consideration of the guarantee which it gave, and partly out of local interests in New Brunswick—if it arises from that, then to that extent the difficulty is one that cannot be helped. If it arises from the fact that improvident rates of freight are charged, if freight is carried under cost, and without the advantages which a company management would keep in view, namely, the advantages in the way of other lines of business—raise the rates. I go so far as to admit that. If there is loss by undue working expenses, or expenses under the name of working expenses, by mismanagement, by duplicating offices or increasing the number of officers on duty, let us ascertain that, and I think surely that can be put down by the Government, without its being considered absolutely necessary that Parliament should actually give it up as an impossible thing to attempt to stop mismanagement of that kind. I shall cheerfully join my hon. friend from Albert (Mr. Weldon) in ascertaining where the difficulty and the waste lie, and if it lie in that direction shall assist in putting it down and I think we can put it down as well without a commission as with it. As regards prompt action in making rates for special cases, he must remember that the Intercolonial Railway is peculiarly situated as to co-operation with other roads. In nine out of ten of the cases to which my hon. friend refers, and in which he says prompter action is necessary, are cases in which application is made to know the rates of freight which can be made from points lying away off the Intercolonial Railway to points on it. Under such circumstances, no rate can be fixed and no rate can be made by the Intercolonial Railway alone, because the Grand Trunk Railway intervenes, or the Canadian Pacific Railway intervenes; and until the intervening railway, whichever it may be, make a special rate, the Intercolonial cannot do so. Sometimes when persons have made serious complaints to me of want of prompt action, and want of promptness in giving an immediate answer as to what rate of freight will be made from some point in Ontario to the seaboard, I have complained to the department of the want of prompt-

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tude, and I have found that the answer of the intervening railway was that they declined to make a special rate for that class of goods at that time of the year. That may be for reasons which it is not worth while going into now; it may be because the carriage in some other direction would be more advantageous, or because some other rate had been given to some other customer; and the Intercolonial Railway, of course, has to bear the blame of all this. I have only to say in addition, as in fact I think I have said before, that the subject which the hon. member (Mr. Weldon) has brought to our notice deserves very careful consideration, and that we are, in pursuance of the promise that I think was made before, at all events in pursuance of the resolution that was arrived at some time ago, now ascertaining the practical working of the commission system in the Australian colonies, and endeavouring to ascertain, as far as we can, what other forces, beyond the mere change of management, have produced the results which have been arrived at there. But we have something more to do. Before we adopt any remedy our first duty is to ascertain whether there is any abuse connected with the working of the Intercolonial Railway itself which can be cured, and whether the domestic cure is not quite as good and as effectual as the foreign one. We have to ascertain whether there is that duplication of officers which has been alleged; we have to ascertain whether there is a want of firmness in dealing with fraud when it is discovered, and we have to apply a suitable remedy if so. But I do not think it will be found, on the most careful and strict examination, that the cause of the deficit is by any means the lowness of the rates of freight, to which the deficit has been popularly attributed by members residing in other parts of the country.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). The subject that is brought under the attention of the House by the member for Albert (Mr. Weldon) is one of considerable interest, and it is of all the greater interest to every section of the Dominion, because the failure of the Intercolonial Railway to pay the running expenses has imposed a very considerable burden upon the public treasury. I do not know how far the Minister of Justice would be disposed to argue that because this road was a political undertaking, and its construction was a part of the terms and conditions of union, that therefore the cost for freight and for passengers should be fixed at a very low rate, and at a uniform rate in every part of the Maritime Provinces, in order to place all the people who reside in these provinces, in this respect, upon a footing of equality. The Intercolonial Railway forms a part of the terms of the Union, precisely in the same way that the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway does, or the extension of railway communication to the North-West Territories. They were all embraced in the articles agreed upon by the Quebec Conference prior to the passage of the British North America Act. I do not understand that the Canadian Pacific Railway imposes uniform rates for freight and passengers in every portion of its line, and I have never heard that those who are paying higher rates than others that were more favourably circumstanced claimed that the terms or conditions of the Union were in that respect interfered with. I see no reason that would put the Intercolonial Railway in a different