

discuss the very general information, the somewhat vague information, which has been afforded to the House with regard to the railway policy of the government. A full opportunity for that discussion will be afforded when the policy itself is laid before the House and before the country. But I may say, in passing, that no one can fail to recognize the very great responsibility which this government has undertaken when it has seen fit to override the opinions of the man who, of all others in the cabinet, had the most experience with regard to transportation questions in this country; and particularly are we impressed with the responsibility which the government has taken upon itself when we realize, even from the vague and general statement made by my right hon. friend, the extraordinary character of the proposal which is to be announced to parliament before the end of this session. I do not propose to stop to discuss it now; the House is not in a position to discuss it now in the way in which it should be discussed, because we have not the details before us. But there is at least one point which I may press upon my right hon. friend, and press upon him, I think, with a great deal of force. It is well known in the country that the question of transcontinental transportation has been engaging the attention of this government for more than a year. The question to all intents and purposes of a transcontinental railway came before this House, was mentioned in this House, and the attention of the House was directed to it, at the beginning of the present session of parliament, and an announcement was made in the speech from the Throne regarding it, in the following language:

The great influx of population into our North-western Territories, and the very large additional areas of fertile land which are being brought under cultivation, combine to further press upon us the need for increased transportation facilities for the forwarding of our grain and other products to the markets of the world through Canadian channels. The whole question of transportation and terminal facilities continues to occupy much attention, and my government will immediately appoint a commission of experienced men to report on the subject.

Mr. Speaker, we have now entered well upon the fifth month of the present session, and up to the present time, until the general statement made by the Prime Minister to-day, not one single word of information has been afforded to parliament as to what the railway policy of the government is; and up to the present time not one single meeting of that transportation commission has been held. Indeed I believe, the gentlemen who are to compose it have not yet been finally selected. Although the questions with which that commission is to deal are questions most vitally and closely touching the very matter which the government will bring down, I hope, within

a few days, we are to proceed to discuss in this House the construction of a transcontinental railway through a country which the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals says we know nothing about; we are to proceed to discuss that question without one single word of information from the gentlemen who are to constitute that transportation commission. My right hon. friend may say that these gentlemen were to deal with the question of improving facilities upon the lakes, and with equipping our national ports. I say that it is impossible to separate those questions from the great question of another transcontinental railway; and you cannot properly, or adequately or fully deal with that question until you have the information before the House which should be afforded by a commission, and by the report of that commission laid before the House. Now, I say that, in passing, for the purpose of impressing upon the right hon. gentleman who leads this House and upon his government the importance of bringing this policy, if a policy there is to be, before this House at the very earliest moment. In the closing days of the session, is this House, is this country, to be called upon to decide, in the hurried way in which these matters have to be dealt with in the last hours of the session, upon a policy which is so startling and of so much importance to this country that the man who above all others in the government is supposed to be able to form a safe judgment upon it, has found it necessary to separate himself from the government and to declare that the policy which the government propose to bring before this House is one which is not in the true interests of this country, but which according to his well considered and well matured judgment, may properly be characterized as not only extravagant but even absurd. Now, how long does my right hon. friend propose to keep the House in ignorance of the details of this policy? How much longer is this uncertainty to continue? How much longer is this House to wait while the members of the government are making up their minds and settling their differences, if differences there be? Because rumours are rife with regard to such matters. How much longer is the House and the country to be kept in ignorance of this project in order that matters of this kind may be determined by the government? I say that if this government proposes to deal with this question at the present session of parliament, we have already waited too long. I say further that if the government adopts the extraordinary course of bringing down in the fifth or sixth month of the session a measure of this kind, without any report from the transportation commission which was referred to in the speech from the Throne—I say that if the government propose to continue this delay still longer, they merit, and I believe they will receive,