can we attack them ? If we sue them and get verdicts, from whom are we to collect damages ? This is a matter which should be taken hold of in a statesmanlike way. I stand here regardless of what effect all this may have upon the voting power of this country. We should do what is right, regardless of that power. The very votes that we pander to are the votes that will turn against us if we show weakness. That has been so in the past, and will be found to be true in the future. I ask the government to bring down something stronger, something more manly, something more national than we have in this Bill.

Mr. T. S. SPROULE (East Grey). It seems to me that there is very little difference between this Bill and chapter 24 of the Statutes of 1900, the last Conciliation Act. The only difference that I can see is in reference to the parties to whom it may apply. The Bill passed in 1900 applies where difficulty exists or is apprehended between an employer or any class of employer and the workmen, while the other Bill applies to disputes between railway employers and their employees. I do not know what interpretation a member of the legal profession would put upon it, but it seems to me that the first Bill might apply to railways as well as to any other department of industry. Is it not a fact that, under the provisions of the Bill of 1900, the minister has himself already appointed the commissioners that are now inquiring into some labour troubles in British Columbia ?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I suppose the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sproule) is referring to the commission now sitting in British Columbia. That commission is appointed under chapter 114 of the Revised Statutes of Canada.

Mr. SPROULE. It seems to me that it could equally well have been appointed under this Act of 1900, which has reference to the appointment of conciliation boards. The Act provides that the minister may :

(c) On the application of employers or workmen interested, and after taking into consideration the existence and adequacy of means available for conciliation in the district or trade and the circumstances of the case, appoint a person or persons to act as conciliator or as a board of conciliation ;

(d) On the application of both parties to the difference, appoint an arbitrator or arbitrators.

The report is made to the minister, and a memorandum of it kept. It provides also :

It shall be the duty of the conciliator to promote conditions favourable to a settlement by endeavouring to allay distrust, to remove causes of friction, to promote good feeling, to restore confidence, and to encourage the parties to come together and themselves affect a settlement and also to promote agreements between employers and employees with a view to the submission of differnces to conciliation or arbitration before resorting to strikes or lockouts.

The conciliator or conciliation board may, when deemed advisable invite others to assist them in the work of conciliation.

If, before a settlement is effected, and while the difference is under the consideration of a conciliator or conciliation board, such conciliator or conciliation board is of opinion that some misunderstanding or disagreement appears to exist between the parties as to the causes or circumstances of the difference, and with a view to the removal of such minunderstanding or disagreement, desires an inquiry under oath into such causes and circumstances, and, in writing signed by such conciliator or the members of a conciliation board, as the case may be, communicates to the minister such desire for inquiry, and if the parties to the difference or their representatives in writing consent thereto——

—The government may appoint commissioners to make the inquiry.

I take it that all this would apply equally well to railway employees as it would to employees in any other line. So it seems to me, all the power that the minister would have under this proposed measure, he already has under the existing law. Perhaps my interpretation may not be exactly correct, but I notice that in his explanation of it, he himself tells us that the object is to aid the boards of conciliation in promoting the settlement of trade disputes and difficulties that arise from time to time between employers and employees, and that it is hoped that the affirmation of this principle may prevent strikes and lockouts. He goes on and explains it in that way. Then he refers to the English Bill of 1896. Long before 1896 the system was in force. Since then I think statistics show that six-sevenths of the disputes have been amicably settled by consent of the parties, either through a board of conciliation or by the parties themselves while the boards were in deliberation. The first Bill provides for conciliation boards and arbitration boards, the second Bill provides for the same thing. I see no difference except that the first Bill does not apply to railways, but it lays down provisions where the Act might be invoked, and which I think would enable the minister to take up railway disputes as well as any others. If that be so, then this Bill is unnecessary. Now the duty of the committee is set forth here. There is to be a conciliation board, mediation and investigation. That is conciliation and inquiry. Now what is the difference between investigation and inquiry ? Both have to report back to the minister ; neither have any authority to enforce their findings, and the dispute is left an open question.

It should be the duty of the conciliation committee to endeavour, by conciliation and mediation——

The very same words as are employed in the other one.

—to assist in bringing about an amicable settlement of the difference to the satisfaction of both parties, and to report the proceedings to the minister.