

sition do not like to go back on the bargain, because the honour of the country may be at stake. The Minister of Railways might as well ask us to let him govern the country and do what he pleases without any restriction, as to ask us to consent to this resolution. While the Ministry may be capable men and wonderful legislators and financiers, yet the representatives of the people want to have something to say in these matters. This seems a preposterous thing to ask; it means government by Order in Council.

Mr. MEIGHEN: How far would the hon. member be willing to trust the matter to the minister?

Mr. NESBITT: I think the minister should take us into his confidence as to what he wanted to do.

Mr. MEIGHEN: How far would you let him go?

Mr. NESBITT: I could not say until I saw the proposition before me; I never try to get over a bridge until I come to it. Personally I am disposed to give a minister considerable latitude, but this seems to be going beyond all reason.

Mr. MACLEAN (Halifax): While hon. gentlemen on this side of the House would be only too glad to give the minister such authority as is necessary to carry out any project for the extension of the Government railway system in the interests of the country, still the authority asked for in this resolution goes too far. I think the minister will admit that it has not heretofore been the practice for the Government to undertake the construction of a piece of railway of any considerable length without first asking Parliament. Under this resolution, the minister, with the authority of the Governor in Council, could enter into a contract for the construction of a piece of railway from Quebec to Vancouver.

Mr. COCHRANE: Parliament would have to vote the money.

Mr. GRAHAM: You could make the contract before you had the money.

Mr. COCHRANE: We have no authority to make contracts without money being voted.

Mr. GRAHAM: But you are taking the authority now.

Mr. MACLEAN (Halifax): If under an Act of Parliament a minister is permitted to enter into a contract for the construction of a transcontinental railway, the person with whom he entered into the contract would be entitled to damages if Parliament refused to vote the money subsequently to enable the minister to proceed with construction under that contract. When it is further pointed out to the min-

ister that under this resolution he could lease the Canadian Pacific railway, the Canadian Northern railway, or the Grand Trunk railway, he must admit that he is asking for very considerable powers.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Does the hon. gentleman remember how far the former Administration went with the Grand Trunk Pacific contract before coming to Parliament?

Mr. MACLEAN: My recollection of that is not clear, and any statement that I make might not be accurate. My own impression is that the contract was submitted to Parliament and that it was provided in the contract that it should be submitted to Parliament.

Mr. BOYCE: The contract was entered into and was ratified by Order in Council. The country was bound to it, and then the Government submitted the contract to Parliament. The whole scheme of expenditure was provided for under the contract. The Government was bound to it by Order in Council, and then the contract was sent to Parliament for ratification. That happened in the case of the contract of 1903, and also that of 1904.

Mr. MACLEAN (Halifax): My recollection of the Grand Trunk Pacific contract is that there was a provision in the original contract that it had to be submitted to Parliament. Even if it was as the hon. member states in connection with the Transcontinental contract, I would take the position that that was a weakness. It is altogether subversive of our ideas of parliamentary institutions to grant to the Governor in Council by statute such unlimited powers as are sought in this resolution. It seems to me that the minister should be content to ask for much less power than this resolution gives.

Mr. BORDEN: I do not think the resolution is of the revolutionary character that my hon. friends opposite imagine. As a matter of fact, a great many contracts have been brought down to Parliament after having been first entered into by the Government without any such authority as is contained in this resolution. The Yukon contract, the East Atlantic Service contract, the Grand Trunk Pacific contract, the Canada Eastern Railway contract, the Drummond County Railway contract—these are only a few that occur to me at the moment. All these were made by the Government, and of course they had to be submitted to Parliament for its approval, and legislation had to be passed before they acquired legal validity. The Minister of Railways and Canals has pointed out that this resolution does not appropriate any public moneys for the purpose of carrying out any purchase or lease or