

We cannot afford to buy the Grand Trunk Railway or the Canadian Pacific Railway. As the country grows, as population increases, as the cultivated area of our farm lands increases, we will have more important work for the railways to do, and a government-owned road alongside of the roads of these two great corporations will regulate freight rates and will be in the public interest. Government ownership is a question of growing importance, not only here, but the world over. Government ownership is coming in England to-day; it has been justified in Germany, in Italy, in Austro-Hungary, in our sister colony of Australia, and there is an agitation in the United States in favour of government ownership that eventually will come. It will come in this country, not as a broad sweeping measure, but on the line of keeping our present national road, extending it in various sections of the country and retaining control of the various portages. This railway between Toronto and Collingwood is a complement to the canal system, not opposed to it, and it ought to be under the control of the government. The portage railway between Toronto and Collingwood, if owned by the government, would furnish a large amount of freight for the St. Lawrence canals and the St. Lawrence River route. If that road should fall into the hands of the Canadian Pacific Railway, or the Grand Trunk Railway, it would be of no assistance in the matter of providing freight for the St. Lawrence canals or the St. Lawrence River route, but, keep it under the control of the government and there will be a new industry established in this country. There will be a great forwarding industry in connection with the St. Lawrence River and the St. Lawrence canals, and not only will a great transportation industry be built upon the railway lines and canal routes of this continent, but relief will be given to the North-west Territories so long as the government control this railway. I do not wish to make this a party question. I am sorry that the hon. gentleman who preceded me took a party view of it. I apologize for even appearing to take that view of it, but I do hold the government responsible in view of the statements they have made, in view of the statements made by their organs and the credit they have claimed for themselves, that they were doing something to keep the control of railways in the hands of the government. I charge that they are going back on their railway policy, and that they are allowing the hon. member for Kent to dictate the railway policy of the country. It is not in the interest of the public that such a policy should be adopted, and I appeal to hon. gentlemen to-day, although I have appealed to them in vain before, to keep their pledge and insist upon the amendment offered by the hon. member for West Toronto being adopted.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS (Mr. Blair). Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to follow the hon. gentleman (Mr. Maclean) who has just taken his seat, but I leave him to continue in the enjoyment of the opinion he entertains in regard to the government and in regard to their policy in connection with this question. I rise at the present time for the purpose of making a remark, or two, upon the question which is really before the House. I do not complain at all of the statement of what transpired before the committee which was made by the hon. leader of the opposition (Sir Charles Tupper). The question came up in this form, at least, it presented itself to my mind in this manner: Several gentlemen from Toronto and the west, interested in a number of Bills, at least, there were two different Bills, I think, providing for the construction of a railway from the Georgian Bay to Toronto, Collingwood being the harbour on the Georgian Bay. There were very strong expressions of opinion that this was the most desirable route for connection between the waters of the Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario, and at the same time there were very decided opinions that the time would come when that route would be found to be necessary and of very great advantage to the country as a means of carrying the products of the west to our Canadian ports in competition with American ports. From that point of view, I, myself, not being prepared to pass any decided opinion upon the question, not knowing whether this route was the most preferable of all the routes that could be selected between the Georgian Bay and Lake Ontario, not knowing what the advantages were that would accrue from such a railway, but taking the statements which these gentlemen who prepared this Bill made to the committee, I thought that the time had not arrived when such a railway could be turned to advantage. I thought it was premature, as the hon. gentleman has said, but I said, that if the view that these gentlemen entertained upon the subject was well founded, and if this railway was likely to be a valuable means of transporting the products of the west, and could accomplish what could not be accomplished by our great waterways, by way of competition with United States ports, I felt that that route should be under the control of the country. I still entertain that opinion. I do not think we are in possession of the information yet, we do not know whether there is a likelihood of this particular railroad between these particular points affording opportunities and facilities for the transport of western products superior to that which will be supplied by our great water route. Therefore, I think the proposition is premature. But assuming to be true what these hon. gentlemen who are promoting this Bill with such energy and zeal seem