

Hon. Mr. TILLEY said there would be no objection, and the return would be furnished with the least possible delay.—Motion carried.

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GRAND TRUNK RETURNS

Hon. Mr. HOLTON moved for an order of the House directing the Grand Trunk Railway Company to comply forthwith with the order of this House issued on the 17th February. He said certain returns had been moved for in the early part of the session, which unless furnished immediately would be too late to allow of any action during the present session. If the books of the Company were properly kept, any expert accountant could prepare the returns asked for in two days.

Hon. Mr. CAMERON (Peel) said that he had been informed that the information had not yet been supplied, because the returns had not been completed.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON asked whether the hon. gentleman could say when they could be completed. He thought the officers of the Grand Trunk Railway should not try to thwart the House in that way, as there was no doubt that the returns might have been completed a fortnight ago.

Hon. Mr. CAMERON (Peel) was informed that it was utterly impossible that the returns could have been completed sooner, and they would be supplied in the course of a fortnight. There was no desire on the part of the Company to place any difficulty in the supplying of the returns.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON said Mr. Brydges had written a letter, stating that the returns were not in the possession of the company, but that the statement would take a considerable amount of preparation. The returns ordered by the House included the gross earnings of the Railway during the years 1867, 1868, 1869 and 1870, the working expenses for each of those years, and the sum paid as interest on debt; and he maintained that there was nothing in the nature of these returns which have prevented them being furnished a fortnight ago, and he thought that the statement, that another fortnight would elapse before the returns could be obtained, was equivalent to treating the orders of the House with utter disregard, and he trusted the House would know how to preserve its dignity, if its order was not immediately complied with.

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER was surprised to see the hon. gentleman in such a state of unnecessary fury and excitement.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON raised a point of order; that the hon. gentleman was not justified in saying he was in a state of fury and excitement.

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER said that when patients got excited and confused about nothing, physicians sometimes found the best thing to be done was to make them laugh, and noticing by the smile on the hon. gentleman's face that he had accomplished that object he acknowledged the call to order. The Return asked for was of very great magnitude, and considering the immense size of the Grand Trunk, the fact that it was divided into sections, each with its centre, he thought it could not be said that there had been any unnecessary delay, for even with the advantage of having all information on the spot, Government often found themselves unable to supply returns asked for without considerable delay. He was sure that no delay had been caused by the Grand Trunk intentionally, although they might take exception to making any returns beyond those prescribed by law, but he was sure they desired to meet the wishes of the House in the matter.

Hon. Mr. CAMERON (Peel) said that the returns prescribed by law were made in the months of April and October, and the information asked for had already been published up to the 1st July, 1870, but it could not be furnished up to the end of that year until the returns had been audited, but he was authorized to say that the whole matter would be before the House within a fortnight.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON said he was somewhat surprised to hear the Minister of Militia affirm that there could be any doubt as to the right of the House to order the returns in question, especially as the Grand Trunk Railway appeared in the public accounts a debtor to the extent of \$25,000,000.

Hon. Sir GEORGE-É. CARTIER said when he had explained this matter, he thought the hon. member for Châteauguay would see that he was correct. He had intended that the Grand Trunk Railway might object to furnish every information that might be asked by any member of that House, on the ground that it related to their private affairs. For instance, if he were to take a particular section of the road, say from Toronto to Stratford, and ask for a return showing the undue profits of contractors and stating in what condition the road had been when handed over by the contractors, would not his request be fairly objected to? The Grand Trunk were not obliged by their Act of Incorporation to make the returns asked for, but knowing that they were subject to the Legislature they were desirous of complying with its wishes.

Hon. Mr. DORION said the rule as to information that could be obtained was very simple. All corporations created by Parliament were bound to make all returns demanded by a majority of that Parliament. The point had been set at rest years ago, when the late Mr. McKenzie had moved for a return of the names of Directors of Banks. That motion had been opposed by the Government, but the majority of the House had adopted it, and since then the right of the majority to ask for any information they chose had never been questioned.