

Canada that, as someone expressed it here this afternoon, the railway question is, as this house knows, the greatest problem without exception that Canada has to face at the present time. He would be a courageous man who would take the attitude that Canada has not too many railways, too many canals and too much duplication of various other kinds of facilities and utilities.

It must be admitted that world conditions in general and Canadian conditions in particular have been improving during the last few months. To my mind there is no doubt that conditions are on the upgrade. It is my belief that within a few short years, perhaps in one or two, conditions will be back practically to normal. But at the moment I should not like to take it upon myself to say that conditions have approached so nearly to normal that as a member of this government I could promise to start forthwith the building of this railway.

I took a briefer part in the debate last year than I have done to-day. At that time I was perhaps more frank than polite in replying to my hon. friend; I told him that we could not give this matter any consideration. I did not mean that as a short answer, although, and perhaps quite rightly, my hon. friend was annoyed. I thought it better to say just what I thought on the matter, that it was beyond the realm of possibility at the time. I believe that conditions to-day have improved so much that, without promising immediate construction or anything of that sort, I can promise that the matter will be given fair and honest consideration.

During the past few months both the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railway have been able to show better earnings than they have shown for some time. From about 1928 the returns for these railways started to go down and down until we began to think there was no bottom to the pit into which they seemed to be descending. But six months ago, for the first time in two or three years, railway earnings started to increase; that is, the earnings for each week of this year began to show an improvement over the earnings of the corresponding week last year. This improvement has continued for almost six months without interruption, and this in spite of the fact that our grain has not been selling very well throughout the world during the past year. Our wheat sales have not been such as to satisfy most of us, whether from the west or from the east. The earnings of the Canadian National Railways for the month of January and the first three weeks of February show an increase of some-

[Mr. Manion.]

thing over \$3,000,000 compared with the corresponding seven weeks of the previous year. I am sure that all members, from whatever portion of the country they may come or to whatever party they belong, will be pleased to know that our railway situation has somewhat improved. Whether we or some other party is in power, the fact remains that the people of Canada have been placed in the unfortunate position of having to pay the deficits on that great system. In the past these deficits have amounted to huge sums and I am very happy to be able to state to the house and to the country that the railway situation appears to be steadily improving.

Last year the hon. member moved a motion similar to the one he now moves, and it was voted down. In 1932 the hon. member moved a motion which was slightly different in its terms. His motion of 1932 read as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, in the best interests of Canada, it is desirable that the construction of the Peace River outlet should be commenced at the earliest possible date.

I believe I am correct in stating that the resolutions of this and last year are the same.

Mr. KENNEDY (Peace River): Yes.

Mr. MANION: The hon. gentleman confirms that statement. His resolution this year reads:

That, in the opinion of this house, the Peace River country should be connected by a direct railway outlet to the Pacific coast.

I intend to move in amendment, seconded by the Solicitor General (Mr. Dupré) that three words be added to this resolution. There may be some question as to whether they alter the meaning, but I think they would make the resolution more acceptable to myself, to the members of the government and to hon. members on this side. I hope my hon. friend will accept this amendment and that the house will give it unanimous support. My amendment is:

That the resolution be amended by adding the following words: "when circumstances permit."

The resolution will then read:

That, in the opinion of this house, the Peace River country should be connected by a direct railway outlet to the Pacific coast when circumstances permit.

This amendment is not moved with any desire of blocking the resolution, but rather to call attention to the necessities of the present financial situation. May I point out that a resolution which was voted down last year by a vote of 133 to 39, I believe it was,