

measure, myself among the number, as an opponent of the Bill, are taunted with being timid, with being deficient in pluck, unable to grasp a large problem, somewhat provincial in our ideas, and incapable of appreciating the increasing growth and progress of Canada. I deny this charge, and, as far as my denial may be of any value, I want to make it emphatic. I am not open to any such reflection. I do not admit at all that a well digested, well considered scheme of railway development, a scheme called for by the needs of the country and to be proceeded with as soon as it could be reasonably proceeded with, would be opposed by me. I would not be found placing any opposition whatever in the way of such a scheme. I am as willing that the resources of this country should be taxed to the full ability of the country for the purpose of railway development, reasonably necessary to develop the illimitable resources of this great country, as any man in this House. But, Sir, I am not thereby prevented from saying to those who ask me to give my assent to this project: How do you reach your conclusions? On what information are you going? Have you exhausted the necessary sources of information, and where is this thing going to end? It is only the part of reasonable prudence for a man to do that. Nobody is worthy of the great trust which the people of the country is reposing in those to whom they have intrusted the administration of their affairs unless he is prepared to resist pressure brought on him to act hastily, and unless he is determined to give to the subject that careful study and deliberation which will justify him in assuming the responsibility of proposing the legislation asked for. I felt, Sir, as one, and particularly, as Minister of Railways in my hon. friend's government, that the country would expect me to apply my judgment to the questions which came up. Having somewhat more experience in the matter of railway construction and railway operation than many of my colleagues, and being charged particularly with the government's business in that regard, I felt that on me would rest a larger measure of responsibility; and I was entitled to know enough, and to see into the matter far enough, to justify me in asking parliament with a clear conscience and well settled conviction to give its assent to the proposition to be laid before it. Barely six months ago this question was first mooted. Six months is not a long time to consider and weigh and look into a project of this kind, which had not been mooted before; particularly when it is borne in mind that a large portion of these six months has been occupied by the sitting of parliament, when every minister has his hands full, when his thoughts are fully engrossed with the business of the session, and when some have particularly important measures pending before the House.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR.

In that, I speak for myself, because, as Minister of Railways, I was charged with the carrying forward of a piece of legislation which was very important, and which required the best thought and attention I could give it, in order that it might be perfected at every point. This being the case, was this the time for one to endeavour to comprehend and shape and advise upon, and think out a proposition of this magnitude? Why, you have only to dwell upon it for a moment to see how unreasonable such a suggestion is. Every session of parliament we put off things of the most trivial moment because we have not time to deal with them. Every session, Bills that are pressed upon us are put by until the following session, simply because we have our hands full. Yet, right on the eve of the sitting of parliament, after we had taken up large policies, after we had arranged to propose large expenditures, when it was known that we were going to have our best thoughts and acutest judgment strained to the utmost to do justice to the subjects with which we would have to deal, we undertake to grapple with a problem of this immensity and complexity, and one involving such great financial and other responsibilities. Well, Mr. Speaker, the bonding privilege up to that time had never impressed anybody; the imperious need of a great transcontinental all-national line had never forced itself upon anybody's mind. Within a few weeks of this sitting of parliament this thing is first mooted. And here we are now putting the final ratification—if we shall do it—upon a measure, which, when it is once passed is beyond recall, which, when once passed is so irrevocably done that the people of Canada will have no more to say as to whether this thing shall go on, than will the common council of any county in the land. My hon. friends have taken the precaution—I do not say they have unfairly taken the precaution, but the precaution has been taken—of making a contract with somebody representing the Grand Trunk Pacific, a company not even yet incorporated, somebody who undertakes to speak for the Grand Trunk Pacific as to what the company will so do, and also with somebody who undertakes to say what the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada will do; and they have signed this contract in all its details, with all its clauses and conditions, and they have put that upon the Table, and they say to us: Accept this or reject it; take it as it is, or leave it; you have but one alternative, to swallow the whole, or reject the whole.

Now, I want to know also, in all calmness and all frankness, from the members of this parliament, from whence comes this irresistible and compulsive pressure under which we must drive this thing through now? The thing was never mooted before, and the government took no action, until