

tercolonial railways. Those railways could not be sold to-morrow for the debts that are against them. Therefore, public ownership is here for the time being and must be given a fair trial, as the Government has decided. For the moment public ownership is not in issue.

In this connection I would submit that the Government should let the country know exactly the present financial position of all the roads composing the National system, because it is not at present very well known either to the country or to this House. We should understand exactly what their present financial position is, because if the Government's policy of giving these railways a fair trial under public ownership is to be carried into effect, as I am sure it will be, in order to determine whether or not Government direction and control is to bring to these railways the advantages and benefits which we would like to see accrue to them, we must know beforehand the exact position in which these railways stand financially. Operating accounts for the last three years in the fullest detail should be laid before Parliament. I am aware the position was taken last year that these operating accounts should not be made public, and I gather that the House was told at that time that such accounts should not be laid on the table for fear the Canadian Pacific Railway Company should find something in connection with those accounts which would enable its management to take advantage of our National system. That seemed to me to be a very flimsy reason. The time has not arrived in this or any other country enjoying British parliamentary institutions when you can lay down the doctrine that hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds are to be spent without the people or their representatives having the right to know the disposition of every single dollar. If we are going to give a fair trial to public ownership, then a most essential element is to have these financial statements laid down upon the table of the House. Only in this way can you know where you are going to begin under public ownership.

Let me say, I do not regard the operation of the Canadian Northern Railway, or the so-called Canadian National Railway, since 1918 as being operation under public ownership. What is the use of talking about public ownership of these railways when you have Mackenzie and Mann's officials operating them? What is the good of talking about the failure of private ownership rendering public owner-

ship necessary if you take the gentlemen who could not operate these railways successfully under private ownership and put them in charge under government ownership? You have got to start square with this thing. We upon this side of the House do not want to be responsible for the peculiar policies that characterized our railway administration under the direction of the right hon. leader of the Opposition and his friends. We want to start fair.

Allow me to digress for a moment, Mr. Speaker. My right hon. friend and his associates have been very fond of asserting that they were not responsible for this railway problem at all. That has been reiterated time and again in that form of propaganda which my right hon. friend and his colleagues so well know how to use, and which he is so afraid somebody else might use, though nobody has any intention of following his lead in that direction. By his propaganda he has declared continually during the last two years that the Liberal party was responsible for the railway situation. Let us examine the facts. As I have already said, I had the pleasure of sitting in this House in three Parliaments, and I was here in 1911 when the right hon. gentleman and his friends took charge. What was the railway situation then? The government owned the Intercolonial, as it had owned it for forty-five years. It owned the Transcontinental, stretching from Moncton to Winnipeg. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company had title to the Grand Trunk Pacific railway from Winnipeg westward. That was the position. Those were all the railways that the government of Canada had anything to do with when my right hon. friend and his associates took charge in 1911. The Transcontinental was under lease to the Grand Trunk Railway Company with respect to operation on terms which would have freed this country from any responsibility financially. But what did my right hon. friend and his associates do immediately after 1911? They appointed a commission with a view to discrediting the construction of that railway and of playing into the hands of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, who wanted to get rid of the contract. Eventually, after a couple of years, having laid the ground-work, they proceeded to let the Grand Trunk Railway Company escape responsibility, and the government took the Transcontinental over. Were we responsible for their action? Then, in 1913,