

The hon. member for Shelburne and Queens (Mr. Fielding) said that the other handicap was that we had failed to associate with public ownership all the proper safeguards. I submit that I have answered that fully. I would call the attention of the hon. member to what I believe to be the fact: that the greatest example of public ownership in Canada is the Hydro-Electric Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Adam Beck. I cannot say positively because I have not made the explicit inquiry, but I believe that the commission is administered in the same manner that we propose to administer the Canadian National railway. I do not believe that there is submitted to the Legislature of Ontario an estimate of the full amount required by the Hydro-Electric Commission with every detail of expenditure as is the case with the departments of the Government.

I submit that my hon. friend is mistaken in his view that there is any departure in this Bill from the principles of sound public administration. There is a change in mode but the change is that which is imposed upon us by the necessities of corporation management and for the same reason that it is imposed upon the Canadian Pacific shareholders who entrust to a board nominated by them the administration of the company's system of which they are the owners.

Mr. BUREAU: Is the Acting Prime Minister a believer in the state ownership of railways?

Sir THOMAS WHITE: Yes, I am.

Mr. BUREAU: That is all I want to know.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: I will tell my hon. friend why. Take the situation in Canada at the present time. We have found that private ownership of railways, with the exception of the Canadian Pacific, has failed. I stated the other day in the House, and I state now, that private ownership plus politics have brought about the situation with which we are confronted in this country. The Government of Canada in order to save its own investments—represented by its guarantees and the guarantees of the provinces of this Dominion—and to safeguard the transportation interests, has been obliged to take over the railways that we are administering to-day, and will be obliged to take over practically all the other railways except the Canadian Pacific.

Mr. FIELDING: If my hon. friend believes as fully as he would wish us to think [Sir Thomas White.]

he does in the principle of State ownership why except the Canadian Pacific?

Sir THOMAS WHITE: I am a believer in a national policy of taking one sound step at a time and to the extent that it is necessary. There is another reason: The Canadian Pacific Railway Company is an admirably managed institution serving this country efficiently and well, and I think it desirable at the present time that there should be two railway systems in this country, one of which will be, so to speak, a check, in the sense of efficiency in the administration, upon the other.

An hon. MEMBER: Which one?

Sir THOMAS WHITE: Well, I say to my hon. friend that looking to the farther future—I shall not refer to Canada because I do not want to be specific with regard to it—it may not be in our time, but in Great Britain and in the Overseas Dominions and in Europe, it will be found that instead of the waste of duplication and of competition which is connected with private ownership of separate railway systems, there will inevitably come public control of railway systems. I believe that is the opinion of the ablest men connected with private railway enterprises in the world to-day. In order to bring about efficient administration you must have a board, or a commission, in whom prima facie the public have the utmost confidence—more confidence even than they would have in the Government.

Mr. ERNEST LAPOINTE: This Government, for example.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: Take the Hydro-Electric Commission in Ontario. The public have confidence that it is being properly administered—

Mr. LEMIEUX: Is that the view of the Minister of Railways?

Sir THOMAS WHITE: —and looking to the farther future, for the purpose of preventing duplication and waste there will undoubtedly be public control. I was speaking to a gentleman of high distinction from England no later than yesterday, and he told me they were reconsidering the whole railway situation in England. There was duplication of terminals, expensive duplication of tracks, all these things in this period following the war, and for the elimination of waste they are considering, and they are going to bring about, the efficient and economical use of all the railway systems of the country.

An hon. MEMBER: And the shipping.