

us that there is practically no work done. True, there is a little roadbed, but it has been partially destroyed. The Minister of Railways took this amount of money out of the vote of \$4,000,000 last year to do some cement work to protect what little had been done. In my judgment, he took this amount illegally. I was just going to say to my hon. friend that the Government has decided to buy that property, whatever there is to be purchased, and to construct the road—

Mr. SEVIGNY: I think the roadbed is practically complete between St. Joachim and Murray Bay, and if my information is correct over two million dollars was spent by the Quebec and Saguenay between those two points.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I may tell my hon. friend that the so-called roadbed was built at a small cost. The company had no money, and in order to get money they issued bonds, and they had to pay twice the amount in order to satisfy Mr. O'Brien, the contractor. It never cost \$2,000,000. Whatever was done had to be protected this year by the Minister of Railways and Canals, and I call his attention to the fact that he took that money out of the vote of last year, and in my judgment he could not spend one red cent out of that vote because it was conditional. The item in the appropriation made last year read as follows:

To provide amount required to be paid for the Quebec, Montmorency, and Charlevoix Railway, the Quebec and Saguenay Railway, and the Lotbiniere and Megantic Railway, and for the equipment, appurtenances and property used in connection with such railways, to be acquired under the authority of a statute passed at the present session, and to provide for the cost of completing, equipping, and operating the said railways, the operating expenses to be chargeable to revenue.

The statute enacts that the Exchequer Court shall fix the value, and the railways, of course could not be acquired until the Exchequer Court had passed on the actual cost. Therefore, any money spent by my hon. friend was illegally spent. I suppose he meant well when he did it, but nevertheless it was illegal. When this question came up last year, my hon. friend from Kingston (Mr. Nickle) used the following language, which applies this year as it applied last year.

But this I do want to say: in a time when the Empire is at war, when every dollar that Canada can raise is required for the legitimate purposes of the war—and as to this I have been deeply impressed by the speeches that the Minister of Finance has delivered in this House and elsewhere—I cannot bring myself

to add anything to the burdens of the people of this country. If these were ordinary times I might not feel so strongly on the question, but being influenced by the judgment of the Minister of Finance—and I have great respect for his judgment—and realizing that a commission is about to be appointed to consider the whole railway problem in Canada. I cannot see my way clear to voting for the continuance of this amount in the Estimates.

The conditions to-day are the same as they were last year. We are at war spending large amounts to maintain our status at the front. We are taxed right and left. We are piling up a public debt which is simply appalling. We are borrowing at usurious rates of interest in the foreign markets, and this is no time to spend lavishly on a scheme which is simply nauseating. Every one who knows the origin of this scheme knows that it is nauseating. But, we discussed this matter last year when it came before the House.

I want to make a proposition to the Minister of Railways, and I think it is a fair one. The Lotbiniere and Megantic is a little bit of a road on the south shore of the river St. Lawrence in the counties of Megantic and Lotbiniere. It is a lumbering road. It has no relation whatsoever with the Quebec and Montmorency. It is several miles on the other side of the river and making towards Sherbrooke. It was intended to reach the United States boundary originally.

Mr. McKENZIE: Who owned the road when the Government bought it?

Mr. LEMIEUX: It belonged to the same group of gentlemen. They launched an immense scheme on the European market. They advertised that scheme as being a semi-transcontinental railway. The road was to start at the United States boundary, cross the river St. Lawrence by the Quebec bridge, link up with the Quebec and Montmorency, which was a tramway originally designed to carry pilgrims to and from St. Anne's, and the Quebec and Saguenay railway, which, first of all, was to run to Nairn Falls, and which, it was afterwards announced, was to go as far as Cape Charles on the Labrador coast. That is how it was advertised in the very alluring prospectuses which were issued, and which captured the money of the innocent French investors on the other side of the Atlantic. But the Lotbiniere and Megantic had nothing to do with the Quebec and Montmorency and the Quebec and Saguenay. Let my hon. friend do away with that bit of railway. It is merely a lumbering road.