

many places in the West, and we find ourselves in that position from the want of some provision—whether freedom of competition or other regulation—which shall prevent these facilities from being converted into a machinery whereby the railway company inflicts, in effect, a tax on the farmers of the North-West, instead of a reasonable compensation for the work it does. Under these circumstances I cannot doubt that whatever the Administration have done, they have taken care to provide for the most strenuous competition between the new company and the St. Paul and Manitoba Railway Company, so that the moment we have the gateways of the North-West placed in the hands of a private corporation, we shall have the benefit of that friendly competition and rivalry which will result in the immediate cessation of these extortionate rates and this proportionate interest in the farms of the North-West, and in a reduction to reasonable and normal rates of profit. There are, Sir, several possible solutions of this problem which is now presented to our consideration. You have that of free competition, that of Governmental power of regulation, that of parliamentary power of regulation, that of arbitration, that of a reserved interest in the country itself, that of giving running powers to other companies so as to preserve moderation in freights, and there may be others. We know not what the particular solution of this great problem is; but that it is a great and difficult problem, now for the first time presented to our consideration by our being practically brought face to face with the proposal that the road shall be owned and run by a private railway company, I suppose no hon. gentleman will deny. We know not what the mode of settlement of possible disputes between the Government and the Company as to the contract may be. We know not what the traffic facilities for the connections with other Provinces may be. There will be one great corporation stretching practically to the ocean steamships; it is right and proper that every facility should be given for trade to go through; it is equally right and proper that every facility should be given to such trade as may be seeking the North-West through other channels, and on fair, equal and advantageous terms to make use of the national highway to which all the Provinces of this Dominion are bound to contribute. We know not what security may be given for the performance of the contract in case a security is required. A security is not required unless the enterprise turns out disastrous; but what the nature or the extent of the security which in that event it has been arranged to give us, so as to secure that limitation of the liability on which the hon. member for West Toronto desecanted so eloquently, we do not know, and therefore of its value cannot judge. All these things press on us now for consideration—all these things, and many more. I do not wish to prolong the discussion of this question by a reference to matters which, though they may be termed matters of detail, are still of importance; but all these things, and other matters are involved in the great question to which our attention is to be addressed. So long as the country was doing the work, so long as from session to session we could practically control it, things were different, but now they are to be altogether changed. Now the matter is to be regulated and arranged once for all, and regulated and arranged by the intervention of a corporate interest, introducing these new elements of difficulty, these new conditions to which, practically, we have never as yet addressed our minds. The aspect of finality and the creation of a company and its rights, therefore, impart elements of the utmost importance and of practical novelty into the discussion of this subject. The hon. the First Minister is reported to have said in a speech which he made shortly after his landing in this country, on his return from the English mission, that the contract had been made "firm;" that the contractors would go on at once, whether Parliament met in November or in

February; that the meeting of Parliament would make no difference, and that they would trust to the ratification of the act. This statement hardly coincides with the statement which the First Minister has put into the lips of His Excellency, and which we heard in the other Chamber the other day. It is, of course, for the hon. gentleman to reconcile these statements and to explain how it is that his first, and I believe his only, public announcement as to the character of this contract and the nature of the arrangement with these contractors, should vary in a degree so material as I have pointed out from that which is now given to us; and whereas it was then a matter of no consequence at what time Parliament was summoned and the work was to progress, it is now said that the public interest requires that we shall not wait to February, but shall proceed immediately with the discussion and come immediately to a conclusion upon this question. In my opinion, Sir, the public interest requires, above all things, that this tremendous business should not be too hurriedly disposed of. The public interest requires, above all things,—and it is the right of the public to demand,—that there shall be some time allowed to obtain that information which has not yet been brought before the country; that the country shall have breathing time for consideration and reflection, for communication amongst the people themselves, as well as amongst the people's representatives assembled in Parliament, before we shall be called upon to give our verdict upon a question so momentous as this. We have been told, not authoritatively, indeed, but it has been suggested in Ministerial organs, that the dignity of Parliament required that no communication should be made upon this question, until the people's representatives were assembled here in Parliament. I am not quite certain, Sir, that there is not more than one hon. member of this House who would have been quite disposed to put his dignity in his pocket for the purpose of allowing himself in common with his constituents, opportunity of becoming acquainted with the contents of this paper, and of having a sufficient apprehension of the subject before the meeting of Parliament, particularly if such a result would have also produced the result of a meeting a little later than the present meeting. If an unusual course was to have been adopted, I, for one, should have preferred—in a business like this,—as being more in accordance with the development of popular government which has obtained in this country, that the people should have had the opportunity of expressing their opinion upon this subject at the polls. More than this, we are told that the people shall not even know the details until after it is disposed of. They are not even to become acquainted with the terms of this bargain until after their representatives shall have passed upon them. Time is essential in my judgment; time is due to the people for that consideration which they require and which they are entitled to. I have no doubt that those of us who feel we have responsibilities to discharge on this occasion, have considered this question conjecturally so far as we could. I have no doubt we have thought it over with such dim and uncertain lights as Ministerial bounty has vouchsafed us in the matter. For myself I confess I have thought over a great deal such scattered statements as have, from time to time, been made to us. But I say that this sort of discussion is eminently unsatisfactory. One likes to know, before coming to a conclusion on a subject, what the subject is on which we are asked to come to a conclusion; and I say, as to the mass of the people, that they can have formed no conception of this matter, and that they might properly and reasonably have expected that the papers should have been laid on the Table, and that ample time should have then elapsed before we were called upon to consider them and deliberate upon them. But, on the contrary, according to a rumor which has spread about these benches—I do not say it is correct—if we are good boys and say our lessons well, according