

per annum. Well, the road has been managed, and it has been extended very greatly indeed, and yet its annual loss since the operation began has not been equal to that. The hon. gentleman will remember that irrespective of the point the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) raised about the construction of the British North America Act, and the right of this Parliament now to change the condition of affairs as they were at the union—the House will recollect, that regardless of the letter of the law, or the construction of that Act, that this was the very consideration between the different provinces: that the road should not merely be built, but that it should be built by the Government and run by the Government. I can recollect having read with great interest an able speech by Mr. Brown during the Confederation debate in the old Parliament of Canada, in which he said: So necessary was it for Canada to have that road—not so necessary for the Maritime Provinces by any means—but so necessary was it for all the provinces to have the Intercolonial Railway constructed that the running of it at a loss was a mere bagatelle, and that whether it paid or did not pay the interest, that we could not have Confederation without it, and that he, for his part, was ready to pay the price of five Intercolonial Railways in order to consummate the union of the provinces of British North America. Taking into consideration all these facts in connection with the history of this great work, I say that while we may very wisely and properly set about devising some system of management for improving the running of that road, if it can be improved, and for assisting these merchants and traders of our country who wish to send their business over the road, yet we have no reason to regret from one point of view the present condition of affairs. Bad as anyone may picture the condition of the road, and much as they may regret that the receipts do not show up better than they do, yet they have every reason to congratulate themselves that they are not as bad as all the provinces understood they might be when they undertook this responsibility. So in connection with the canal system, as I have already said. The arguments are familiar to hon. gentlemen, and they apply to a Government railway and to a railway of that character binding the Maritime Provinces with the rest of the Dominion. The canals do incalculable benefit to the commerce of the country, and the tolls and the rates are certainly considered a secondary matter in the canal system. It does seem to me as going to a great length to endeavour to discuss the Intercolonial Railway on any other principle. Hon. gentlemen sometimes run away with the impression that this road is for the Maritime Provinces alone. It has been pointed out to-night that the chief loss occurs on the through business, and on account of the through rates; and if the figures of the traffic were stated I think it would be found that the bulk of that through traffic is from the west to the Maritime Provinces, instead of from the Maritime Provinces west. I hope these tables will be turned some day, and that the Maritime Provinces will send up as much, if not more, than they now receive from the western provinces. This, therefore, is not a question in which the lower provinces are alone interested. It is a question thoroughly national in its inception and in its working out. Some hon. gentlemen have

alluded incidentally to the construction of the Short Line Railway, and whatever may be said about that, I do not think that a political aspect can be given to it in this connection, because the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), who rather quarrelled about the construction of that road, will remember that a very large proportion of his own colleagues of the Liberal party in this House supported the Government in the steps they took to construct that road. I am one of those who are of the opinion that the construction of that road is not going to injure this country, no matter what the temporary effect is on the receipts of the Intercolonial Railway. I believe that that road is of great benefit to Canada, and that it will become a greater benefit every year. It is the carrying out of the original undertaking to give us a direct connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway system between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) made a passing allusion to coal; but the Minister of Justice pointed out a principle in connection with that well known to railway men. He could have gone further; and I put it to these hon. gentlemen who are familiar with the business of different railway corporations, that they know themselves that the railway companies of this country will carry business for almost nothing, and sometimes actually for nothing, and that they will expend money for the purpose of drawing traffic to their road. Take the matter of construction of hotels along the railway system, which is often an expenditure out of pocket by the railway company in order to obtain passenger traffic over its line. The companies will take an interest in different private matters that a Government railway is debarred from entering into on account of the political difficulties that surround all these transactions, and they will resort to all kinds of schemes in order to bring traffic to the road. The original outlay is brought back to them a hundred fold. But before the rate on coal can be quarrelled with the argument that has been advanced in support of it to-night by the Minister of Justice should be met, and that is, that it applies practically now on the Intercolonial Railway to the Spring Hill mines only. The Pictou mines do not send any coal over the line at the rate of three-tenths of a cent per ton per mile. The coal they ship pays a very remunerative rate to the Intercolonial Railway; they ship to Halifax and to St. John and to tide water, and that coal pays, and pays well; but if the rate to the west on the Spring Hill mines coal were increased it would simply either close down the mine or cause such a small output that the flourishing town of Spring Hill—which has grown up, and is absolutely dependent on these mines, and now furnishes the chief customers of the Intercolonial Railway for many miles of the road—would be wiped out, and the loss to the road would be enormous in that respect. These mines bring in a very great amount of freight and machinery for construction purposes, and so on, and they pay a very heavy rate on these articles. The people they employ and the business interests connected with them all through the provinces bring goods over that system; and I do not hesitate to say that railway men everywhere will tell you that if a private company owned the Intercolonial Railway they would make the rate whatever was necessary in order to haul that coal and keep the railway at work, simply for the great benefit that would result from it. But the rate is