

the schemes of unscrupulous people. That was the condition then, but what do we see to-day? Hon. gentlemen opposite are, metaphorically speaking, tumbling over one another in their eagerness to show their desire for the construction of another line from ocean to ocean. We find them by motions and amendments, by declarations in the public press, at every stage of the discussion, declaring that they are not opposed to the construction of another railway but wish to express their disapproval of this, that or the other feature of the scheme. When the project was brought down to parliament, it was found that the scheme was so bold and comprehensive, so carefully thought out and guarded in the public interest, and entailed so small a charge, comparatively speaking, upon the public treasury, that these hon. gentlemen were amazed that the government should have been able to negotiate such a scheme. From that moment down to this the process of evolution—nay of revolution—in the minds of hon. gentlemen has continued until to-day they are out-bidding each other in their protestations of favoring, by one mode or another, the construction of another transcontinental line. That is the position in which they are now as compared with that which they occupied a few months ago.

AN UNSTABLE LEADER.

My hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, felt himself impelled by those conditions to make a change of policy at a very early date. A very short time after the government proposal was brought down, and when it became known that it was going to accomplish great results at a very moderate cost, my hon. friend found it necessary to turn right about face, and brought down a scheme of his own to create something which he called a transcontinental railway.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The hon. gentleman speaks of my having made a right about face and as having expressed an opinion against another transcontinental line. I am not aware of having expressed any such opinion.

Mr. FIELDING. I am speaking of the general attitude of the opposition.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. FIELDING. And I have the right to assume that the leader of the opposition was in harmony with his followers.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Who were those who expressed an opinion against another transcontinental line?

Mr. FIELDING. I am speaking of the general attitude of the opposition, and I can refer my hon. friend to the discussions of the Railway Committee and in the press of his party. I am speaking, not of any particular utterance, but of the general attitude of the Conservative party on the question at that time. If my hon. friend the leader of the opposition carefully refrained from taking any decided stand, it simply showed that he was waiting to see which way the cat might jump.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Might I ask a question? Is there any truth in the remark that the Minister of Finance was likely to follow the ex-Minister of Railways (Mr. Blair) and leave the cabinet on this question?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh, and order.

Mr. FIELDING. I have no objection to answering. I rather like this questioning, but I did not quite catch what my hon. friend said.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Is there any truth in the rumor that the Minister of Finance was contemplating leaving the cabinet?

Mr. FIELDING. Will my hon. friend please tell me who said so?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Rumor has it that the hon. Minister himself said so.

Mr. FIELDING. I think I can answer my hon. friend by asking him his authority for the statement. If anybody said so, I give him the most unqualified contradict