

that the Opposition, whenever they debate the question of railways, should throw up an enormous cloud of dust and yet absolutely fail to proclaim their faith in the principle of public ownership. While it is quite possible that the Government may in matters of detail or even in the general management of the business fall more or less into error and be open to criticism, because that is the lot of all human beings, nevertheless by this very Act the Government are pledging themselves to the principle of public ownership, and it is merely wasting the time of this House and of the people of the country to issue such vacant challenges as we have just heard.

Mr. CAHILL: Sure it is. Nobody will take them up on your side.

Mr. BURNHAM: The Government stand or fall by the principle of public ownership. They have found that the giving of subsidies and the granting of lands and making financial arrangements with vast private corporations were running this country into bankruptcy; so this new policy has been adopted. The Opposition is not trying to find any way out of the difficulty at all, but is simply standing for private ownership. If the hon. member who has just sat down (Mr. Cahill) wishes to back up his challenge by going into some neutral constituency and fighting the election on the principle of public ownership, he will find many a man on this side of the House to take up his gage. But on the other side of the House, I believe there is not one man in favour of public ownership.

Mr. CAHILL: What about you?

Mr. BURNHAM: I am ready to back up what I say. If any man wishes to contend West Peterborough on the question of public ownership, I will resign and go right at it. Let my hon. friend stand up and say whether he wants it done.

Mr. CAHILL: If the Government will open the constituency, I will do it.

Mr. BURNHAM: Do I understand that he accepts the challenge?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Resign.

Mr. DUFF: I will fight you.

Mr. BURNHAM: What does the gentleman say who is waving his arm so wildly over there? What are the wild waves saying? There is no getting away from the fact that this Bill is a test of where we stand on public ownership. Whoever heard of such a thing as seriously suggesting, in discussing this clause, that the date should

be changed from Thursday in April to the end of December, as if the affairs of these great corporations could be managed by such guess-work as that. Let hon. members of the Opposition proclaim one after another this afternoon that they are in favour of public ownership, and then there will be some sympathy for them not only in this country but on this side of the House. But there is not the slightest doubt whatever that they are against public ownership. They are here to express their opinions, and if they are not opposed to public ownership let them say so.

This House should manage the public business of the country, and if it is not capable of directing public corporations, it is not fit, directly or indirectly, to conduct the public business and therefore the whole system of democratic representation stands condemned by the men who rise and make such trivial complaints as we have listened to. They do not care how far-reaching or extravagant their statements may be, because they are determined to oppose public ownership and advocate private ownership, since there is more in private ownership for their friends than there is in public ownership.

Mr. C. A. FOURNIER: I have not taken a very active part in the discussion of this Bill, but I have listened very attentively to all that has been said and I am really at a loss to know why my hon. friend the leader of the Government, when he spoke last Friday, deemed it fit to make such a scathing indictment of us Liberals sitting on your left. We were asking questions simply because we desired information, and I fail to understand why he should impute to us any motives other than that, and to suggest that we were endeavouring to espouse the cause of private ownership rather than public ownership, and that we were unprogressive Liberals lacking faith in Canadian enterprises, and believing that the great Prairie Provinces did not need railways for their development. The unmistakable inference from his remarks was that we on this side of the House did not want further extension of railways in the West, and his statements were calculated to set the West against the East. That is all I can make of it. Then my hon. friend in the greatness of his heart, and no doubt for the purpose of showing his consistency, pleaded for unity, with all its intoxicating memories. He urged us to be optimistic and to have faith in the outcome of this great period of reconstruction; but no sooner had he completed the remarks in which he made this lofty appeal than he