

GOVERNMENT IS

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argue against public ownership, but it was a large question on which the wisest of Canadians were divided. Many felt that the legislation before the House constituted a dangerous experiment. The Dominion now owned 14,000 miles of railway, said Mr. Fielding, which ought to be enough to give public ownership ample opportunity to justify itself. But in spite of this, Parliament was asked to plunge into this large enterprise without adequate investigation into the merits of the proposal.

Mr. Fielding said the Drayton-Acworth report was the only report on railway conditions which the members had to guide them, and that had been made nearly three years ago. The matter before the House was a report of the value of the stock, and the Drayton-Acworth report had said the stock was worth practically nothing. Now it was proposed to give a certain part of the stock a valuation of \$60,000,000, and submit \$180,000,000 worth of it to arbitration, when it would be given "heaven knows what value."

Boards of trade at Montreal and elsewhere were against the measure, and while they were not all the public, their opinion should be heard and respected. The House had not received sufficient information as to the details of terms themselves seemed very hazy on this transaction, and even the minimum points.

Moved Amendment
Mr. Fielding introduced an amendment which was to the effect that the bill be not now read a third time. The amendment set forth that the information before the House was insufficient; that there had been no inquiry into railway rates since 1914, when the Drayton-Acworth report was made, and that that report had said the entire stock had practically no value. The amendment recommended that a commission be appointed to investigate the whole matter affected by the bill, and bring a report before the House as quickly as possible.

Hon. Arthur Meighen said it was rather strange after the Liberals had been protesting against commissions for so long to see them ask for another commission, this time on railway matters. He thought perhaps this was the result of the new leadership. It was at least a statement of the policy of the Liberal party.

King's Contentions
Hon. MacKenzie King had attacked the bill before the House on the grounds that it did not mean Government ownership, but that the Government proposed by it to delay the coming of public ownership for a number of years. His lieutenant, Mr. Fielding, on the other hand, declared that the House and the country were being rushed into Government ownership too rapidly.

Mr. Meighen said he would ask Mr. Fielding, whose name appeared on the documents in regard to the Grand Trunk Pacific, if ever a measure had received such notice. The Liberals had protested that it was being rushed into the House too soon. However, on May 15, 1918, the prime minister had said the acquisition of the Grand Trunk system was inevitable, and had also announced that the Government was even then in negotiation with the Grand Trunk Railway Company.

The House was then warned, a year and a half ago, that acquisition of the Grand Trunk was likely to be an issue before the House last session, but now when it came up, six months later than had been stated, the Liberals cried out that they were not given time enough to consider the matter, and that they had not heard of it. Later in the 1918 session the matter had been referred to again, and the finance minister had added a warning to that of the prime minister.

Laurier's Attitude
Sir Wilfrid Laurier's attitude then was that he was not opposed to acquisition of the Grand Trunk. He said that he did not condemn the policy, that the Grand Trunk Pacific must be taken over by the Government, and that assuming the control of the Grand Trunk was a thing of the future.

Mr. Fielding himself had sat in Parliament when these matters were discussed, and when those statements were made. The Drayton-Acworth report was in favor of the acquisition of the Grand Trunk. The public of Canada and the members of the House had received plenty of notice that this measure must come. Acquisition of the road had been the subject of newspaper debate for a long time, and the Government plans in regard to the measure had been well known.

Every hour that Canada remained in her present conditions, declared Mr. Meighen, the Grand Trunk Railway Company was relieved a little longer of its obligations toward the Grand Trunk Pacific. Members of the Opposition said that we should try out public ownership with our present system, but our system at present was incomplete. A test of public ownership without eastern feeders was no test at all. It looked as if the Opposition members were trying to discredit public ownership and place it in a position where it would be damned for ever.

West in Favor
In closing, Mr. Meighen intimated that the real leader of the Opposition in its fight against the acquisition of the Grand Trunk was the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was interesting to note, he said, that the opposition to this bill was generated from and operated around the city of Montreal, the home of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Notwithstanding the fact that it had been stated that the Regina Board of Trade was opposed to the taking over of the road, Mr. Meighen declared that the West was strongly in favor of it.

Dr. W. D. Cowan, Regina, remarked that the resolution of the Regina Board of Trade had been passed by seven men out of a city of 40,000.

One important reason for taking over the road, said the minister of the interior, was to eliminate waste and duplication of lines. A glance at the railway map of Canada showed duplication of lines all over the country, and trains were dispatched out of our great cities constantly which carried but half a load because of this wasteful competition. The proposals of the Government were the only possible way of making the partner of the unfortunate bargain consummated in 1903-04 with regard to the Grand Trunk Pacific shoulder a share of the losses.

Jamming Tactics

Mr. McKenzie argued that the Government was trying to jam the bill through. As it had been reported out of committee only yesterday, today was the first opportunity for the Government to bring it up for third reading. In spite of objections by the Opposition it was insisting on going on with the discussion.

W. S. Mitchell interjected to remark that he had advised the Liberal whip that the Grand Trunk bill would be taken up today.

Mr. McKenzie replied that the arrangement had been that the bill would be proceeded with if the Opposition had sufficient members present. This was not the case.

Continuing, Mr. McKenzie cited the British North America act to prove that the Government was not really taking over the road as Government property. The British North America act provided that Government property was not subject to taxation, but the Grand Trunk would be taxed even if it was taken over. Therefore, it was not Government property.

Nothing Wrong
Speaking before the House on Grand Trunk matters, said Mr. Meighen, the prime minister had said that a commission should report on the

whole situation before the matter went shut) if he would invest some of his many millions in the Grand Trunk without first making a thorough investigation and making the Grand Trunk pay for that investigation. No businessman, he asserted, would undertake such a proceeding with his own money, but because this was the money of the Canadian people it was a different matter. There was no urgency in this matter. If a man had a herd of ten cattle which were not paying he could not make the whole herd pay big revenues by adding two

more of the same kind. He said the Government should allow the Grand Trunk to pay part of its debt to the Government by giving running rights over the Grand Trunk to the Government roads. **Mere Camouflage.** Mr. Meighen reported that the Government already had plenty of running rights; what it wanted to make the systems pay was the business it could secure with the Grand Trunk network of branch lines. Mr. McKenzie replied that the cry

of needing this road was mere camouflage. If the Grand Trunk could not pay under the present experienced management it would not pay the Government. R. L. Richardson said that the Opposition, instead of defending the rights of the people as they claimed, were really betraying them. The country, he said, was in a dangerous position, almost beyond description, and prompt action was necessary. It was absurd for the Opposition to argue that the bill did not provide for public ownership because the Grand Trunk would continue to pay taxes to the municipalities. The adoption of Mr. Fielding's amendment would throw the whole project in the air when it was essential that there should be as little delay as possible. At the present time the Dominion was losing about 25 millions per annum on operation of railways, but with the acquisition of the Grand Trunk system such economies could be practiced that in a few years the Government might be able to break even.

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To Port Stanley—10:20, 11:20, 1:20, 2:20, 3:20, 4:20, 5:20, 6:20, 7:20, 8:20, 9:20, 10:20, 11:20 p.m.
Daily except Sunday.
*Limited train London to St. Thomas.