

Mr. J. D. REID: I do not know who owns the property. We would have to buy land for the right of way.

Mr. BUREAU: The committee should have that information.

Mr. J. D. REID: We shall come to it when we come to the railways in the schedule.

Mr. BUREAU: If we admit the principle of the thing, when we come to the railways in the list, as usual when we come to the end of a Bill, that will be brushed aside with a wave of the hand. If the minister will tell us how much land the Mackenzie and Mann interests own there, and how much of it is going to be traversed by these railways, we shall be able to discuss the matter in a more intelligent manner.

Mr. CAHILL: What mileage was built last year? I understand there was some construction.

Mr. J. D. REID: The solicitor tells me that there was no construction last year.

Mr. CAHILL: The Minister of Immigration and Colonization a few moments ago made the statement that it is absolutely necessary that charters should be extended in this way for the reason that spring was coming and in a few days, presumably, the contractors would be able to go on with construction, which was necessary. I would ask whether the Government did not expect two months ago to have this Bill before Parliament, and if so, why did not they ask for an extension of the charters before the Railway Committee in the usual way? Instead of that, they bring down a Bill prepared by Mr. Lash, and the Acting Prime Minister waxes eloquent over public ownership. Now Mr. Lash is not generally known throughout Canada or Ontario as a great advocate of public ownership; neither is Mr. Hanna, nor Mr. Wood, nor Mr. Mitchell, nor any of the other gentlemen at the head of this undertaking.

Mr. COWAN: What difference does that make?

Mr. CAHILL: All the difference in the world. It means that the Government, instead of giving public ownership a fair and honest chance, are handling it through Mackenzie and Mann, Lash, Hanna, Mitchell, Wood, and the same old gang that has been reaping the harvest from this country for years. Now that it is proposed to construct lines, I presume the Northern Construction Company will come in for some forty-odd construction contracts. Or

[Mr. Cahill.]

will the Government let the contracts to the lowest bidder in the usual way, or on a cost-plus basis? The cost-plus basis seems to be the favourite plan of the Minister of Railways. The Government might also tell us whether they expect this railway will be run in a businesslike way, or whether it expects to hand out to it several million dollars a year from the treasury. The Minister of Railways stated in the House a few days ago that the surplus earnings over operating expenses were \$3,000,000. Am I correct?

Mr. J. D. REID: The net earnings were \$3,000,000 odd.

Mr. CAHILL: And the gross deficit \$7,000,000. Would the Minister say how he arrives at his figures? There are \$470,000,000 odd of bonds on which interest has to be paid, and it is a fair assumption that the rate will not be less than 4 per cent, which brings the interest to \$18,800,000. Now if you deduct the surplus earnings of \$3,000,000 from \$18,800,000, you have a deficit of \$15,800,000. Is not that correct? Where does the Government expect to get with this undertaking when they make such ridiculous statements—statements that are out of all proportion and absolutely against reason and common sense? One member of the Government tells us that we are hopelessly in debt and face a deficit of \$100,000,000. Another member of the Government tells us that we have increased our national wealth since the war began. The only way in which our wealth has been increased since the war began is by the Minister of Finance grinding out with his printing press treasury bills and Dominion notes, departing in the first instance from sound finance, in order to pay the Canadian Northern Railway. Why will not the minister explain how he arrives at his figures?

Mr. ROWELL: Because it has absolutely nothing to do with the clause under discussion, and would only help you to consume more of the time of the House.

Mr. CAHILL: Why did the hon. member make the statement if it was irrelevant to the question? My question was based on his statement. Well, we are going on with this great undertaking with one member of the Government telling us one thing, and another member another. Where do we expect to get in view of that kind of thing? The minister came down here yesterday with this Bill, and the Acting Minister of Justice (Mr. Meighen) was opposed to changing one single letter of it; he would