

ter that the Government has taken over the Canadian Northern railway, but I understand that there is at the present time an arbitration board sitting in Toronto valuing the stock of that railway. If such is the case, the road has not been actually taken over by the Government.

Hon. A. K. MACLEAN: We have acquired five-sixths of the total shares of the Canadian Northern railway.

Mr. CAHILL: But as a matter of fact the railway has not yet been taken over. I sincerely hope when it is taken over its administration will not be placed in the hands of a minister of the Crown, because this is entirely too big a proposition to be handled by any minister, the administration of nine thousand miles or more of railway, with the thousands of employees. I believe the argument has been used that the Canadian Northern is being taken over on the strength of the recommendations contained in the Drayton-Acworth report. One of the recommendations in that report is as follows:

We do not consider that the operation by a minister directly responsible to Parliament would be in the public interest; it would not secure better service or lower rates. We therefore reject the idea of direct Government ownership and operation.

Before the Government asks for this blank cheque, so to speak, for the purchase of equipment for roads which either are now owned by the Canadian people or may be acquired as the hon. minister suggested, we should have a statement from the Government as to what their intended policy is. The minister suggested that other railroads may be bought because every province in the Dominion was asking that that be done. When the Drayton-Acworth investigation was undertaken, we are told the men in charge had to take inexperienced men to make a valuation of the road. On the recommendation of these inexperienced men, after an investigation of six or eight weeks which should properly have taken a year, we are being asked to take over some nine thousand miles at a cost of five or six hundred millions of dollars; and it is now further proposed that we should hand the Minister of Railways a blank cheque to expend the balance of the country's money. Before this is done we ought to know something more about the proposition. There is no question but that our railway condition in Canada to-day is a very bad one, and it will be very much worse judging by existing circumstances. I cannot see how we can possibly manage

this great railway system without placing thoroughly experienced railway men at its head, and in my opinion we should hesitate to authorize the expenditure of such great sums of money for equipment and new purchases.

In connection with the purchasing of other railways, we have the statement of the Drayton-Acworth report, in which it is stated that the Mackenzie and Mann interests had no equity in the stock. Nevertheless we find that a board of arbitration is sitting for the purpose of valuing the stock. Either we should or we should not accept the Drayton-Acworth report. What is being done with the railway situation? Personally, I am strongly opposed to spending one dollar of Canadian money on these railway propositions as long as the system is to be left in the hands of a minister of the Crown. I think that such a policy will lead Canada, as well as the Government, into grave difficulties. I think the situation is one that merits the best consideration of the greatest railway authorities in Canada, and the fact that representations are coming from other provinces in favour of our assuming other railways should should bring home to the Government the actual condition of railway affairs in this country. It would seem to me a good plan to appoint a commission of practical railway men to review the whole railway situation of this country and see if something cannot be done to put our railway systems in such a position that they can be financed and carried along, and not literally "eat us up" as they are apparently doing now. I venture to make the prediction that if conditions continue as they are, if the management of the Canadian Northern railway remains in the hands of a minister of the Crown for two years more, public ownership of railways will be killed for a long time in this country, because the railway systems will get into such a condition that nobody in this country will want to hear any more about Government ownership or public ownership of railways. I know nothing about the abilities or capabilities of the present Minister of Railways, but I do know that he is not a railway man. The railway situation in this country should be handled by practical railway men, and until we take that step I am afraid we shall be heading for a bad state of affairs in the Dominion.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: If the purport of the resolution before the committee was to empower the Government to acquire further railway systems in Canada, the