

invitation of the Minister of Railways himself when, on March 17 last, in making his annual railway statement, he invited every member of the House to come forward with any suggestions of a reasonable character in the hope of bettering the existing state of affairs. Notwithstanding my limitations in connection with this matter, of which, I am only too sensible, the Minister of Railways will admit that during the twenty-one years I have sat in this House I have at least endeavoured to give some consideration to railway matters and in particular to the construction of branch lines. I am sure the minister will not forget my efforts in connection with the branch lines.

We have two large corporations that are to-day owning and operating the railways of Canada. On the one hand there is the great Canadian Pacific Railway Company with a world-wide reputation for the efficient administration of railways and ocean steamships. On the other hand we have the board that is administering the Canadian National railways, young as yet but following a policy which certainly has not created any confidence in the personnel of that corporation. As one who has always entertained some confidence in the policy of the Dominion Government owning and controlling at least a certain mileage of Canadian railways I had hoped for better results. The Government's railway policy, at the inception of Confederation, was rather conceived from the standpoint of competing against the owners of privately-owned railways in order that the people should not be burdened by oppressive freight rates and other charges, and in order to establish fair and reasonable rates—rates which would allow of that commercial expansion which is necessary if this young country is to develop to the extent which we believe is her destiny. For it is undoubtedly true that we must look to our railways to lay the real foundation of our future happiness and prosperity so strongly desired by every true Canadian.

During last session I warned the Minister of Railways more than once not to apply to the Railway Commission for an increase of freight rates, because I considered that any further increase would certainly hamper the development of our industries all over the country. My predictions have come true, in fact, they are confirmed by the statement which the minister himself made to the House quite recently, when he declared as follows:

Our railways were built to develop our natural resources, to build up our country, and to con-
[Mr. Turgeon.]

nect the East with the West in interprovincial trade. Good work has been done and it must not stop. Let me give you one or two illustrations of what high freight rates are doing. We in the province of Ontario have for many years required, in fact used, lumber and timber grown and manufactured in the province of British Columbia. To-day this trade is absolutely cut off owing to high freight rates, thus injuring British Columbia, and Ontario and our country as a whole. British Columbia requires the markets of the western provinces and even the eastern provinces for their products. It is impossible for British Columbia to grow and ship fruit and lumber at the present high rates of freight. The Prairie Provinces must live from the products of the soil. They cannot produce wheat and other products of their farms and ship it to foreign markets if these high freight rates are to continue indefinitely, and vice versa, things that are manufactured in the East that the people of the prairie and British Columbia require, cannot be produced and shipped to the western provinces if these high rates of freight are to continue.

That, Mr. Chairman, bears out my warning of more than a year ago against the imposition of increased freight rates. I then advised the minister to urge the members of the Railway Commission to find other ways of relieving the railways, for instance, by effecting greater economies of administration. I also cited the suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Quebec East, who I regret is not here to-night, that a representative of the workmen should be represented on the 10 p.m. board of management of the national railways, as he would be able to secure greater labour efficiency. We have heard a good deal of complaint about the high wages paid to railway men, but I do not wish to complain of their being too high, and I am willing to believe that the cases which have been instanced of very high rates of pay are merely accidental and do not represent the average rates, and certainly I feel that the men on our Government roads as a whole are as honest and efficient as their brothers on the private-owned roads. The president of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company only a few days ago at the annual meeting in Montreal offered his thanks to the officials and men of the road who, he said, had given the best service possible. I trust before another year is over the directors of our national railways will be able to voice a similar appreciation of their own staff.

Certainly increased freight rates have contributed to the present depression and unemployment. It is said that these increased rates were necessary to offset the higher wage scales under the McAdoo award, but I make this statement, Mr. Chairman, that the increase in freight