

exceedingly whether Canada has ever derived any benefit from railway companies.

Mr. CASEY. I am glad to find that the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill adheres to his determination to secure some legislation on this subject. I agree with the hon. member for Lanark (Mr. Haggart) and the hon. member who has just taken his seat, that some legislation is necessary. There is no doubt that railway companies, which have received special powers from Parliament for the purposes of the convenience of the people, should, to a great extent, come under the control of the people, or of some body appointed by them. The case is even stronger where railways, as is now so generally the case, have received aid from the Government or the municipalities interested in their construction. In this case, there is no doubt that the public interest should take precedence to the interests of the shareholders in any arrangements connected with the running of those lines. These roads have received their charters and large assistance for the very purpose of affording accommodation to the people, and if the shareholders attempt to set the interests of the people at defiance, or manage the lines purely for their own profit, I think it would be proper that Parliament should step in, and protect the rights of those who invested in them. I am very sorry that the hon. Minister of Railways seems to take the opposite view—that he seems to consider that the interests of the railways should be set above the interest of the public. In the objections he has raised against the Bill, he has referred almost entirely to the injury that might possibly be done to the railways by interfering in any way with their traffic. He says that our railways are not isolated—that they have to compete with American railways, and that they should not be handicapped by our putting any restrictions on their traffic arrangements. It is true, they have to compete to a certain extent with American railways, but there is no necessity for these railways competing beyond a point at which it is profitable for them to do so. They have done so, however, and I believe if a Railway Commission were in existence which would sometimes restrict our Canadian lines from engaging in that cut-throat competition, the shareholders of these railways, as well as the public in general, would be benefitted. The hon. member for Niagara tells us that it would be a great injury, not only to the railways, but to our people, if we prevented the railways from getting all the freight they can from across the line. I do not say that it might not be an injury if they did not get some of it; but I say that the carrying of through freight from the west to the sea-board is injurious to the public as well as to themselves—injurious to themselves because they do it at rates that do not pay; and injurious to the people of Canada because, in order to keep down the rates for through freight, they have to charge higher local rates, often to people who have aided in the construction of these same roads. I say that, in such cases, the restriction laid on with the firm hand with which the hon. Minister of Railways would, no doubt, lay it on, would be very beneficial. Discrimination of a very objectionable form also arises sometimes between neighborhoods in Canada, sometimes because certain railways have favored points, and sometimes because they have to compete at certain points with rival lines. We have monopolies in Canada itself—monopolies created by law, as in the case of the great monopoly which controls the entire trade of the North-West, and will probably yet control the entire trade of Canada. We have monopolies created by circumstances, as when one railway only exists in a neighborhood, and will not allow another to go through it. We have monopolies created by amalgamations, where lines created to compete with each other afterwards amalgamate—and this is not one of the least objectionable cases that arise. In fact, in my own county, as well as in neighboring counties, we are feeling, at the present moment, some of the effects of an amalgama-

Mr. WALLACE (Norfolk).

tion of this sort. The people of St. Thomas, a little more than a year ago, gave a very large bonus to the Credit Valley Railway Company to enable them to complete their line to that city, hoping thus to get competition eastward with the Great Western Railway, which formerly controlled all traffic to the eastward; but, Sir, the bonus was scarcely given and the railway scarcely completed when it appeared that negotiations were in progress for the consolidation of the Credit Valley Railway with the Great Western, with which it was intended to compete, so that the people of St. Thomas found, after giving a bonus of \$50,000 to secure a competing line, that they had only secured another branch of the railway which controlled the traffic of the town. Of course it might be impossible to prevent arrangements which might amount to an amalgamation; but if a Commission existed as provided by this Bill, they could very easily provide that the city which had subscribed so largely for the purpose of securing competition should not be defeated in that object. I have no doubt other sections of the country are suffering in the same way, and that the evil will, in a few years, become greater than it is now. There is no doubt that the two greatest railway corporations in the country are competing with each other to buy up existing lines. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company is acquiring all the lines it can get. It has acquired the provincial railway extending from this city to Montreal; and it is said it has acquired, or is trying to acquire, this very Great Western Railway, together with the link between Ottawa and Toronto which is to form part of its through line. We know that the Grand Trunk Railway is also trying to obtain all the side lines it can get; and it is not improbable that, before long, we shall find the entire railway trade of Canada in the hands of those two great companies, which, by their competition, may reduce through rates, but will make up their losses in that respect by the exorbitant rates which they will charge for local traffic. I think the creation of this vast company last year, and the fact of such competition going on between it and the Grand Trunk, are weighty reasons for the passage of some such measure as that introduced by the hon. member for North Simcoe. I do not pretend to have gone through the provisions of that Bill in detail. There are provisions in it, the operation of which I do not quite understand, and provisions which may be objectionable; but I think the House would only be doing an act of simple justice to the people of this country, who have subscribed largely to different lines of railways, in passing the Bill through its second reading, and giving the hon. gentleman an opportunity in Committee of perfecting it, and making it something thoroughly practical and useful. The objection has been made that we cannot do anything to regulate provincial lines. I see the hon. gentleman provides a possible solution of that difficulty by allowing our Commissioners to sit with provincial Commissioners; but that difficulty is disappearing gradually by the absorption of the provincial lines by the two great railway lines of the Dominion. I am glad to see the support which this Bill has received from both sides of the House, although the hon. Minister of Railways appears to be against it. The arguments advanced in its favor are such as occurred to many of us a year ago, when we were discussing the great railway scheme of the Government. We then urged the great danger to the country arising from the creation of a railway monopoly, and I am glad to see that hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House feel the force of those arguments more keenly this year than they did last year, and I trust that, by the passage of this measure, we shall be able to do away with some of the evils which this monopoly may bring upon us.

Mr. CAMERON (Victoria). This Bill has attracted a good deal of attention during the past two or three years in the Province of Ontario. There have been numerous discussions upon it in the press and at public meetings,