

we shall find ourselves in this position: We shall have made a payment in respect of the full value of the whole system—a system which, as my hon. friend (Mr. Robb) said a moment ago originates in Chicago and ends at Portland—and we shall be left with only the Canadian portion of it. I challenge the minister to quote me a precedent where a foreign Government has been allowed to own or take possession of railway lines within its territory but belonging to another Government. The disguise which the hon. minister tries to put upon the transaction will not fool the American Government. It is childish to pretend that the American Government will think that this line is still the old Grand Trunk Railway system. As soon as the Canadian Government takes over the shares that it now proposes to purchase, what has been known as the Grand Trunk Railway system will form part of the Canadian National Railway system, owned and operated by the Canadian Government. This is a serious question, and one which has an important bearing upon the value of the road to the Canadian people.

The Government invite questions. They invite us to study the matter, but they fail to give us the information that we require. I imply from the answers given by the minister that members of the Government themselves do not know what is going to be the action of the American Government. All that the minister tells us is that the American Government is not going to do anything nasty.

The other question which I put to the Government was this: What expenditure will the Government find themselves obliged to ask the House to vote in order to make up for the failure of the Grand Trunk Railway Company to maintain properly and keep in a good state of repair its road, equipment, and rolling stock?

The Minister of Railways says: I gather from verbal information; I gather from newspaper accounts; I have travelled over the Grand Trunk, and I know that it is in good condition. It is childish to say that any man in this country, even the Minister of Railways, can, by travelling over a section of the Grand Trunk from Montreal to Toronto, tell us what amount will be involved in making up the deficiency in the rolling stock and the maintenance of the roadbed. We all know that this section of the road from Montreal to Toronto, and, indeed, to Chicago, is one of the best sections of the Grand Trunk Railway system, and that the equipment which is used by the Grand Trunk Railway from Montreal to

Chicago is the very flower of their equipment. But when a commission of which the present Minister of Finance (Sir Henry Drayton) was a member, tells us—and I read the report to the committee—that the Grand Trunk Railway failed to maintain its roadbed and rolling stock in first class condition; when the three commissioners agree on that; when, as early as 1916, when their report was finally concluded, they said that the company were at that time \$21,000,000 behind, which should have been put into the maintenance of the roadbed and rolling stock, but which was attributed to dividends, and when negotiations have been going on since then between the Government and the company for the purchase of the system, we know that the Grand Trunk officials would not be likely to advise their company to go into any further expenditure for maintenance of roadbed or rolling stock pending the negotiations. The verbal information that the Minister of Railways has given to the committee is not the kind of information to which the committee is entitled. And when the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Meighen) says to the committee: We are ready to give you the information; we invite you to ask for information; I say that it is simply fooling the people of Canada and endeavouring, through the press gallery, to carry to the people the impression that all the information is contained in this little book which was printed yesterday and distributed to-day to the members. In this little book you will find, it is true, a copy of the correspondence and some statistics, but it gives no further information than can be found in the Blue Book on Railway Statistics published last year by the Department of Railways. As to the exact expenditure that the country is now asked to assume and to which we commit the country, there is no information forthcoming, and we get to our queries evasive answers. That, I say, is not the proper way to treat the committee and the people of Canada. If we must carry this through now, if we must study it, we are entitled to more good faith—some further information and clearer answers than those which have been given this afternoon.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Of course, if we stayed here for half a century, hon. gentlemen would have ingenuity enough to ask for something that would keep us here for another half century.

Mr. VIEN: You cannot complain up to now.