

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): The answer given by the Prime Minister is the one I received from colleagues of my own when I pressed the same question, but I have always felt that it afforded opponents of the national system the opportunity to make unfair comparisons between the national system and the privately owned system, owing to this very debt structure.

Mr. BENNETT: Oh, no.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): I will just take a moment to explain why I say that. The right hon. gentleman knows better than anyone else the amount of land contributed by the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway. In no way does that appear as a charge in the capital debt of that railway.

Mr. BENNETT: It is an asset.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Yes, but it is not set out in the capital debt of the railways, and it is just as much a contribution by the Canadian people as the cash that is turned over to the national system every year. On that count alone I have always urged that the two lines should be treated alike. Surely this land was worth money; undoubtedly it was. I will agree at once that until the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway its value was very doubtful, but on the construction of that railway it became worth a very considerable amount of money. When we come to compare the capital debt structures of the two lines of railway, however, it appears very much as though the national system was carrying a very much larger capital debt than that of the privately owned system, and whether we like it or not people will always make comparisons between the two systems. For these reasons I desire once more not to plead the case of the Canadian National Railways but to put it in such a light that it can be judged on its merits in regard both to construction costs and the cost of operation. Personally I do not think there was very much difference between the construction costs of the two lines. Despite all that has been said about the cost of constructing the Canadian National and all the railways that have been taken over by it, I never could believe that the cost was very much more than that of the Canadian Pacific railway, but that is being constantly held up as an argument against public ownership. That was why I wished to make these few remarks.

Mr. CANTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I should like to refer to the remark of my genial friend the hon. member for West Edmonton with regard to the upkeep of the road, and his

suggestion that a large expenditure would have to be made in the near future. In that connection I would remind the hon. gentleman of the fact that conditions have changed. Twenty years ago we had fifty-six pound rails. Then they were sixty pound rails, then sixty-seven, then eighty, then ninety pounds and up to one hundred and one hundred and ten pounds. That one factor plays a great part in the question of repairs and renewals. In addition, in recent years we have been using a hardened steel rail which has given three times the service that was given by the rails rolled twenty years ago. Instead of ordinary ties of cedar, hemlock or pine, according to the part of the country through which the road passes, in the main we are now using creosoted ties, which have a life of twenty years or more; just how long they last and can be used has not been determined as yet. These ties are now protected by tie plates, which we did not have in any quantity twenty years ago, which is another important factor. To-day we also have rock and slag ballast, which tends to cut down the cost of maintenance.

These are the main factors to which I should like to refer. The railway picture is bad enough without adding to it the suggestion of my hon. friend that the railway is going behind enormously because of neglected repairs. In my view that is not a fact. So far as rolling stock is concerned, that is quite a different matter. To-day the railway has probably fifteen or sixteen thousand derelict cars on sidings all the way from Sydney to Vancouver. Those will have to be replaced and additional modern motive power provided just as soon as we can find the money with which to do it, but as regards the roadbed I submit we need have no great concern for some little time.

Mr. HANBURY: To-day in Canada we have a nationally owned and a privately owned railway. We have no basis of comparison in regard to the various services they perform, because the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific have not the same system of accounting. I think it would be very much in the interests of the Canadian people and of the railway companies themselves if they were on a comparable basis, and I suggest that the minister give some consideration to the question of bringing a bill before this house placing the responsibility on the railway commission, probably, to see that a uniform system of accounting is adopted by the two railways so that the Canadian people may have some basis for comparing the results that are being