

found when the present Government took the reins of power? To me, knowing, perhaps, as little about it as any gentleman in this House, it is utterly inexplicable that they should have allowed matters to drift as they did. I ask hon. gentlemen opposite to attempt to explain, if they can, their conduct up to the year 1896. It is now too late for the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals, or any gentleman opposite, to come here and criticise this arrangement and say what could have been done or what ought to have been done. The fact remains staring us in the face that nothing was done by the Conservative Government, notwithstanding that the ex-Minister, of all the Ministers in the Cabinet of that day, and whose duty it was to have the courage of his convictions and to have pressed them upon his colleagues, sat dumbly by, and though thoroughly convinced that the very best that could be done for the Intercolonial Railway was to extend it into the city of Montreal, he sat idly by and, on his own sworn statement, alleges that he did not even broach the matter to the Cabinet. They did not attempt in any practical way to remedy the state of affairs, they simply drifted. Now, I do not wish to reflect upon the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals by saying that he tried to do his best, because he was of the opinion that the proper thing to do was to extend that road into Montreal. He did not do his best by simply sitting idle and entertaining an opinion that that was the best thing to do; he did not do the best he could, and to that extent he is culpable. It does not lie in his mouth now to criticise the fair, business proposition made by the Minister of Railways and Canals to remedy the state of affairs which he admits should be remedied. He was not alone in the opinion on that side of the House, that the road should be extended to Montreal. The hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Ives) was of the same opinion, and is of the same opinion still; the hon. member for Compton (Mr. Pope) was of the same opinion, and is of the same opinion still. At the investigation, the hon. member for Compton gave evidence, and I will read a portion of it, as found on page 141 of the report:

I was always favourable to the extension of the Intercolonial Railway to Montreal, and, my friends being interested in the Drummond County, and believing it to be as good an extension as could be got, I was always at the disposal of the Drummond County Railway people, in any way that I possessed any influence, to assist them in the disposal of that road.

For the purpose of extending the system into Montreal. That being so, the Minister of Railways and Canals cannot be blamed for entertaining the same opinion. Entertaining that opinion, he began to consider what was the best means of remedying the state of affairs then existing on the Intercolonial Railway, and how best to carry into effect the extension of the Intercolonial Railway into Montreal. In order to reach Montreal,

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then, it was agreed, both by the Minister of Railways and Canals and the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals, that one of three routes was available, namely, the Drummond County Railway, which had a mileage of 157·37, the Grand Trunk Railway, which had a mileage of 173·73, and the South Shore, with a mileage of 159·39.

Now, the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals referred to the South Shore Railway in such a manner as to lead a person taking a superficial view of the three routes to believe that the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals should have in preference to the Drummond County Railway selected the South Shore, but we find in the sworn statement what it cost per mile to build railways, and the cost of the South Shore, if built by the Government, or anybody else, would have been \$23,000 per mile, whereas the Drummond County Railway would have cost some \$16,000 a mile to build, and, I may say, parenthetically, that the Government have succeeded in acquiring that road for \$12,000 a mile. It goes without saying that we must be confined to these three possible, available, practicable routes. The question of the Government building into Montreal, I think, need not be considered for a moment. We need only recall the experience of hon. gentlemen opposite in building railways to come to a conclusion, that it will be impossible to controvert the position that the Government could not have seriously entertained the proposition of building. Therefore, the hon. Minister of Railways and Canals saw these conditions existing, these cardinal conditions. I may call them, and these same conditions, perhaps to a greater extent, existed during the incumbency in office of the hon. ex-Minister of Railways and Canals. I think it would be a matter of considerable interest to the House, because it was a matter of considerable interest to myself, as well as a matter of curiosity, to notice how the hon. ex-Minister of Railways and Canals approached this question, and how the present hon. Minister of Railways and Canals approached it. To show you the absolute difference of methods of these two hon. gentlemen, in transacting the business of the country, I will begin by reading extracts from the evidence of the hon. ex-Minister of Railways and Canals. He gave his evidence at that investigation. He felt it incumbent upon himself, at the last stage of the investigation to come forward and put himself under oath and testify, one of the most solemn positions in which any human being can place himself. He was questioned as to the negotiations in regard to the acquirement of this extension of the Intercolonial Railway into Montreal, and this is what he says. I would like hon. gentlemen to carefully note the method in which the hon. ex-Minister of Railways and Canals gives his testimony and the way in which he swears to what he did, or attempted to do, or what he did not do on this occasion: