

ways on this side and to what he said, so. I think I can be doing nothing wrong in treating my hon. friend (Mr. Haggart) as the best authority on railway matters on the other side of the House. Therefore, I wish to call public attention to the fact that the idea, so widely prevalent that it was the policy of the Conservative party, if returned to power, to acquire the Canada Atlantic Railway, and that the failure of this government to acquire it was a grave mistake in the interest of the lower provinces—it is well to understand that this is all a delusion and that it was not the policy of hon. gentlemen opposite to acquire the Canada Atlantic Railway, inasmuch as their railway expert says that neither on exorbitant terms, nor on any other terms, would he agree to the acquisition of the Canada Atlantic Railway. And he objects to acquiring running powers over it. We have no reason to complain on that score. This Bill is a simple one. Many men in Canada have thought that it would be in the interest of the Intercolonial to acquire the Canada Atlantic Railway, or acquire running powers over it, or in some way use it as the western extension of the Intercolonial. A Bill having been introduced to transfer the Canada Atlantic to the Grand Trunk Railway—for that is what it means in effect; though there will be two corporations, the Canada Atlantic Railway will be practically a part of the Grand Trunk Railway—it has been suggested, in deference to the opinion of many people who think we may be able to utilize the Canada Atlantic Railway as the western connection for the Intercolonial, that in passing that legislation we should reserve power to have running rights over that road, which power can be used if deemed expedient and practical. How far we may be able to use that power, how far it may be profitable—these are fair matters for consideration. We are not deciding that we shall use running powers, but are simply reserving to the government and people of Canada power to have these running rights if, in the interest of the country, it be deemed expedient to use them; and we provide that the terms and conditions on which we may claim that power shall be determined by the Railway Commission in the same way as a similar question would be determined if application were made by a private company. Now, I do not think there should be any opposition to that policy by those of hon. gentlemen opposite who believe in the policy of using the Canada Atlantic Railway as an extension of the Intercolonial. They should be pleased that we are acquiring, if not the road as they might desire, the running powers. And the hon. member for South Lanark (Mr. Haggart) need not be alarmed because we are simply reserving a power by legislation, leaving it to be considered hereafter whether that power can be profitably used. I agree with that hon. gentle-

man to a considerable extent that the argument in favour of securing running rights is that it puts the railway in whose favour the running rights are granted in a good position to claim a reasonable traffic arrangement. Even from that point of view, the taking of these powers might be of advantage to the Intercolonial. This is an empowering, permissive Bill. It secures to the government and people of Canada the right to use the Canada Atlantic Railway if it be found, at any future time, to be advisable.

Mr. BARKER. As I understand the hon. member for South Lanark (Mr. Haggart) he would object to acquiring either ownership or running powers. I do not see that to cite that opinion is an answer to the criticism of the hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden), who pointed out that you are taking the worst of the two. Having possibly the power to buy or the power to exercise running rights, the government take the one upon which they must lose. We are opposed, so far as we know the position now, to what is proposed by the Bill. I understand the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) to speak of this Bill as if it merely placed the government as regards a right to running powers in the position of an ordinary railway company under the General Act of 1903. But if that was what the minister intended, he has used rather singular words.

The minister shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, have, for the development of and in connection with the business of any government railway in his charge or direction by virtue of the Government Railway Act, running powers over—

You are getting 'running powers over,' and does the Finance Minister mean to say that he is to take powers without paying for them?

Mr. FIELDING. No, certainly not. I stated that we were not bound to use the powers at all; but we have the right under this Bill to use running powers over that road. If we do not wish to exercise that right, no harm is done; but if we claim to exercise that right, we must have the terms fixed by the Railway Commission.

Mr. BARKER (reading):

According to the terms and conditions and payment for compensation upon which said running powers may be so exercised.

Then you go on to settle it.

Mr. FIELDING. The commission will settle that.

Mr. BARKER. Surely the gentleman who drew that Bill had no idea he was taking an option when the Bill gives absolute running powers.