

come back as quickly as that, with traffic on the railways falling, as it is to-day, out of sight almost every hour? Does anyone think that the railways will pay their obligations to the public? Well, I do not, and I say to the government that if I were in their place I would, on the authority of the Duff commission, unload this responsibility and get it as far away from me as I could. They have authority for that. They appointed a commission comprising the best men they could get, and that is their report. The report was well received by the public of Canada as hon. members know. I did not think very much of it, but that is neither here nor there; but having decided on a policy of divorcing the management of the railways from politics and from parliament, if I were Minister of Railways I would certainly get it as far away as I could, because I should hate to shoulder the responsibility.

Mr. EULER: Would my hon. friend, then, have supported the first appointment of trustees by the government?

Mr. McGIBBON: I gave a reason which I think is justifiable. Having appointed a commission of the most eminent men available, men eminent in railway matters, in finance, and in law, having given freely of their time and having made a report to this house, I think it would be an insult to that commission if we did not adopt their recommendation. I do not pretend to hold my judgment as being superior to theirs but probably I am not as conceited as some hon. members of the house.

An hon. MEMBER: Order.

Mr. McGIBBON: We have a tremendous problem upon our hands and in my opinion this problem will be increased in the future by the fact that mail, express and package parcels will be carried largely by air. The busses and trucks are taking business away from the railways. They serve the thickly populated parts of the country, they stop anywhere for passengers or freight while the situation of the railways is just the reverse. I cannot see a very bright future for the railways in this or any other country. If parliament could solve this problem it would be doing one of the best turns possible to the people of Canada.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member who has just taken his seat based his argument upon the advisability of carrying out the recommendations made by the Duff commission. He stated that as the government appointed this commission, they

[Mr. McGibbon.]

ought to carry out its recommendations. May I say that the Duff commission never made the recommendation which is included in this clause. The clause reads:

No trustee shall be removed from office, nor suffer any reduction in salary, during the term for which he is appointed, unless for assigned cause and on address of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada.

The words "on address of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada" have been added by the ministry.

Mr. McGIBBON: Surely those words were a fair deduction from the recommendation?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: If the Duff commission had thought that it was right and proper that the ministry should be restricted by the addition of words of that kind, those words would have been included in the recommendations of the report. May I give an additional reason as to why they would have done so. Another commission, the Drayton-Acworth commission, investigated the question of railways and it made a recommendation that in the particulars here mentioned it should be impossible for a subsequent ministry to undo anything that a previous ministry had done. That appeared in the majority report of the commissioners. The minority report of one of the commissioners who dissented is very significant. When the Drayton-Acworth commission sought to bind succeeding ministries much in the way that this clause seeks to bind them, one of its members took exception. I shall read his words which were as follows:

I am unable to join my colleagues in their recommendations. They propose that practically all of the railways in Canada, except the Canadian Pacific and the American lines shall be turned over to a corporation to be managed by a board of trustees appointed by the government. They insist that this board is to be permanent and self-perpetuating. I do not know by what means one parliament can bind its successors to a given policy, especially in so simple a matter as changing the organization of a government board. My friends seek to avoid government ownership and operation, in fact condemn it as inadvisable, but propose a plan which contains so many elements of danger in the direction which is sought to be avoided that I am unable to join them.

In other words, the commissioners, as set forth by one of their number, were seeking to make government ownership and operation impossible, and one of their recommendations was that the board of trustees should be self-perpetuating and after appointment not be removable by a ministry at a later date. May I point out that the governments of the Right Hon. Sir Robert Borden and of the Hon. Mr. Meighen had the report of this commission