

would say that probably not one in a hundred thousand could tell what our national debt amounts to. So if the hon. member thinks we will help out the situation confronting the Canadian National Railways by hiding some of the moneys actually paid by the government of Canada and putting it behind a curtain, so to speak, he is much more optimistic about it than I am.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: If it is so difficult for the minister and members of the committee to understand the position of the Canadian National Railways does he not think that fact would be a good argument for keeping the present auditors.

Mr. MANION: Well, if the present auditors have been on duty for twelve years, as has been pointed out, and we have not succeeded in learning much about the situation, I do not think it is necessary to keep them for another twelve years. However, that is by the way.

I think the hon. member said that we had waited four years to make the change. He intimated that we had been in power four years and that the same auditors had done the work. But if we took the attitude that because other auditors coming in will have to learn the methods of the inter-state commerce commission, as was pointed out by the hon. member, and if it is going to take them some months to learn all the details, then, following that argument we could never change the auditors of the Canadian National Railways. We would never be in a position to do that. My hon. friends opposite would come back and try—no doubt they probably would—to change from Touche and Company to some other firm. They might very well do that, without any reflection upon Touche and Company, and they would be tied up with the same argument. In other words, if that were the case we could never make a change.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: The reason I asked the question was that the minister made the statement that Touche and Company were very competent.

Mr. MANION: I do not question that. I consider Touche and Company are competent, but I also submit the firm of Clarkson, Gordon, Dilworth, Guilfoyle and Nash are competent.

Mr. EULER: Do you think the railways can carry all that?

Mr. MANION: They have carried a good deal.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): Another liability.

Mr. MANION: This is one of the outstanding firms in Canada; of course there are others. For instance the Canadian Pacific Railway do not employ Touche and Company but they seem to have their books audited all right.

Mr. HEAPS: Has the Canadian Pacific Railway changed auditors?

Mr. MANION: I do not think they have in recent years.

Mr. GRAY: The Canadian Pacific Railway are not under the inter-state commerce commission.

Mr. MANION: Quite true.

Mr. GRAY: In the second place the minister said they should not be changed as long as they were satisfactory, not merely that their services were satisfactory.

Mr. MANION: Well, perhaps I did although I do not remember saying quite that, but I will accept the hon. gentleman's word. But I submit that I am of young enough mould that I can change my mind. I take that for granted, and let it go at that. I am not going to argue about that at all. Lincoln once said that anyone who does not know more this year than he did last had not much brains to know anything at all.

Mr. HANBURY: What do you know more this year than you did last to account for this change?

Mr. MANION: It is simply that I and the government are of the opinion that it would be a good thing to bring in new blood, a powerful organization to come in and make suggestions, just as it would be in regard to other matters.

I do not agree with some of the remarks of some hon. gentlemen opposite. I think it was my hon. friend from North Waterloo who said this was an indignity.

Mr. EULER: I think I said that.

Mr. MANION: He said that it was an indignity upon Touche and Company that they should be changed. There is no indignity cast upon them at all. They have not a perpetual stranglehold on this job. It pays \$50,000 a year, plus some expenses, not very great. Is it to be taken that for all time, from now until eternity, if we still own the railways when eternity has arrived, we must