

dent one. We are now in possession of the best evidence in the world to show the country what the result would be if we took the road over. Whether there is a technical law justifying it or not, is not the point before the House, but the point is, whether the Government took a reasonable course in trying the experiment.

Mr. FOSTER. I am glad I spoke, because I drew forth this reply from the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. It is weaker even than the statement made, by the Minister of Railways and Canals. These two hon. gentlemen stand together on that, and I am glad to know that they have made out the best defence that can be made. The Minister of Marine proposes to simply make Parliament a tool to register his acts, and in this case to recoup the bad results of experiments with which the Government chooses to try without authorization. What business has the Government of the country to carry on large experiments involving the public funds unless they first come for the authorizing power of Parliament to discuss the question, and to receive its sanction. If the hon. gentlemen can do it in one case he can do it in the other case. Why do they not make a nine months' experiment with these fast line steamers, to demonstrate whether or not it is possible to make it a paying concern, so that afterwards they might come to Parliament and say that we can or we cannot operate a fast Atlantic service. My hon. friend (Sir Louis Davies) cannot possibly justify this action on any constitutional grounds. Another thing this has brought out is that it has discredited the Minister of Railways and Canals. It was on his recommendation that they did this; it was one of his schemes. He either knew the facts or he did not know them, but he led the Government into an expenditure which the Government would not have gone into unless they had been pretty well advised by him that it would turn out all right. It has turned out all wrong. If he is discredited on that, it is one of the best reasons why the House should not take the lead of the Minister of Railways on the Drummond County deal, and on the Grand Trunk Railway deal, and on these airy schemes which he proposes to substitute for them by the vote he is going to ask this House for tomorrow. The man who leads the country into loss in reference to a small scheme, without constitutional or legal right for it, is a man whom you ought to be careful in following in a large scheme, which will have the effect of involving the country in greater loss.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) will no doubt be comforted by the reflection which he has just given expression to. If the Minister of Railways is discredited by this operation, no doubt it will

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be eminently satisfactory to the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster), and it will occasion him no end of delight. I am quite willing that he should enjoy all the satisfaction which the circumstance gives him.

Mr. FOSTER. There are two of us delighted then.

Mr. HAGGART. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries was giving us the idea that he had no information as to what would be the result of working the railway. Did the Minister of Railways and Canals conceal from him the amount of the receipts and expenditures?

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. The receipts and expenditures were not known.

Mr. HAGGART. I beg your pardon.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. How could we know the receipts and expenditures of a road that had been running only five months?

Mr. HAGGART. The hon. gentleman does not understand me. The reports of the working of the road for a couple of years are in the department, and the Minister of Railways and Canals knows to a dollar the amount of the receipts and expenditures. Was he not in possession of all the facts? Was not a report of the receipts and expenditures made by his own deputy? Was not a report made by Mr. Pottinger on the question of taking over the road? Did he not know that the expenditure was \$2,000 more than the receipts—that the receipts were in the neighbourhood of \$17,000 or \$18,000 and the working expenses in the neighbourhood of \$18,000 or \$19,000? What other information does the Minister of Marine and Fisheries want? Has he not the sworn statement of the officers of the road? If he did not know the receipts and expenditures, he ought to have known them, because they were in the department.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE. And a nice thing it was to recommend to the English market—to try to mislead the English market by the amount of about three million sterling.

Mr. SPROULE. The act was either legal or illegal. The Minister admits that it was illegal. He knows that he broke the law, and he admits it. It is a very unenviable position for a Minister of the Crown to put himself in. It is strange to me how the Auditor General, who is supposed to be the guardian of the expenditure, allowed the account to be paid. At some time in the future we may get a little more information on this subject from the Auditor General's Report. The hon. Minister told us that he was about to try an experiment in connection with the Drummond County Railway. I would like to ask him whether, in view of the disastrous consequences which attended