

votes more he would have been returned. I do not think it was any of those reasons. I think it was primarily and directly because the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, speaking as a Cabinet Minister, pledged himself and the government that if they were returned to power they would put an increased duty on fuel oil. That was the inducement that caused those intelligent men to vote the way they did, and I for one am not inclined to blame them. Hon. gentlemen, after what I have said of these intelligent voters of Cumberland, will recognize the kind of economic pressure that must have been put on them before they would have voted contrary to their inclinations, and I believe that it was in order to get this necessary boon of an increased duty on fuel oil. I might say that Mr. Clements was persona non grata with them; it certainly was not a question of voting for the man but of voting for the promise made by a prominent member of the Government. I earnestly hope that he will from his place in the House uphold the stand he took in that riding and see that the increase is granted. So well do I know him to be a man of his word that I feel—indeed, I almost fear—that if the Finance Minister does not grant that increase of duty the hon. member will deem it his duty to resign his seat as a protest against the policy of the Government—the only protest he can make because of the failure of the Government to carry out the pledges which he made on behalf of the government to be.

By the way, they gave me a banquet in Cumberland after the election, which was attended by many of my friends as well as by some of those who were against me. Among other things I asked a man who was there why they did not take my word for it rather than the word of the hon. gentleman, because I, too, promised that if elected I would press for an increased duty, and they might just as well have put their money on me as on my hon. friend. The explanation I got was something like this—I do not guarantee it, because it was only one man's opinion: "Well, we were in a hole economically; we were up against it; we had to help ourselves, and I am afraid the boys thought they would play a sort of safe game. We felt that if the Conservatives got into power, and we had supported them in Cumberland, for shame's sake they would give us what they had promised; but we feared that if they got into power and we had thrown them down, they have such a crude conception of statesman-

[Mr. Neill.]

ship they would not deliver the goods; on the other hand, we felt that if you were elected personally and the Liberals got into power you would be decent enough to assist us and that the Liberal Government, having a wider conception of true statesmanship, would give us justice." So that after that striking tribute to the belief of these men in the traditions of the Liberal party I feel that I cannot do better than leave the case in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, with the assumption that they will give us justice—that is, if justice means an increase of two cents a gallon in the duty.

Now, Sir, we come to the question of railways. I note that the Government are going to make an honest trial of government ownership. Well, I do not deny them that right; I suppose under the circumstances it is the best thing they can do, the only line of policy they can follow. But for myself, Sir, I must confess to having no very hopeful anticipation as to what the result will be. The government is a body designed primarily for the administration of the country's affairs, not for the conducting of a business. The governmental body is unwieldy in itself and is poorly equipped for carrying on these business enterprises. Moreover, there is a constant change of personnel which makes a continuous policy very difficult to carry out. Members of government are too prone to respond to waves of popular feeling, and there is the ever present danger involved in political interest. Does any hon. member within the sound of my voice think that if there was an election to-morrow and the fate or even the prestige of the Government hung in the balance, and it was thought necessary in order to carry the election to promise a railway into some particular district, or a few additional stations, or a lower rate on wheat or potatoes—does any hon. gentleman think that these promises would not be made? If there is anybody in this House who thinks that such promises would not be promptly made under those conditions, he has my sympathy, and I think his friends should consult an alienist.

Just as a little instance of how these things work out, I may say that those hon. members who have come here for the first time must all be struck by the manner in which the government offices are scattered around this town. You go down to see a Cabinet minister, and after much prayer and fasting you are admitted; then you find