

this Bill under the circumstances? I think we should dismiss these 1,100 reasons at once from our minds and deal with the Bill on its merits. The hon. gentleman from Alma division said that one of the fundamental reasons why this Bill should not pass was that it was a Bill which amended the Railway Act; and he said we have amended this Railway Act several times, and we think we have got it nearly perfect now and should leave it alone. It has become now, in the opinion of the hon. gentleman and I presume in the opinion of a number of other hon. gentlemen who are interested in railways, nearly perfect, and we should let it alone, and for the future it must be like the laws of the Medes and Persians, but it happens that in the opinion of the petitioners who have come to this House and the House of Commons, and of many who have not signed the petitions, the Railway Act is not perfect now; and I should like to ask the hon. gentleman from Alma why we are here? It is not chiefly to take care of the railway companies, for they have generally taken very good care of their own interests, and we have taken care of their interests in the legislation which has been passed; but our business is to take care of the people at large. We represent them. They are not represented by counsel and by influential boards of directors, and we are supposed to represent them. If it is found that, looking at the interests of the public, the Railway Act is not quite perfect, then it is our duty, representing the public, to make the Act more perfect, if possible. There is not the slightest objection to altering the law, if we make the law better. That is what we are doing every year. What is our Statute book every year but simply an illustration of the fact that the laws have not been perfect, that we are trying to make them better. I think the Railway Act would bear amendment in other particulars besides that before the House; but I think this Bill—which, by the way, is largely the result of the painstaking efforts of the hon. gentleman who led this House last Session—is a great improvement in the law. The hon. gentleman spoke of it as being the business of the Government to introduce such a measure; but it is not the business of the Government to do all the legislating. We are here to represent the people and to legislate; and, when we are satisfied

that amendments to the law are necessary, the Government have no right to dictate to us as to what we should do. Of course, if legislation that is proposed by any member of this House is repugnant to common sense, or calculated to be injurious to the public interests, then the Government will have no difficulty, if they are hostile to it, in securing a majority to defeat it; but, if the legislation proposed by a member of this House is in the public interest, I think it would be very much to the discredit of this House if they should reject that legislation, simply because the Government do not happen to fancy it. But, in the present instance, I do not understand that the Government are hostile to the proposed legislation. The hon. gentleman from Alma says that we have a Railway Committee of the Privy Council, and if there is anything wrong about the law they can make it all right, but the Railway Committee of the Privy Council cannot alter the law; they simply act under the law. The hon. gentleman, at a later stage, undertook to say that the present plan of doing things was quite satisfactory—that the Railway Committee of the Privy Council would look after the public interest in every case. That may be perfectly true where the country affected is in the vicinity of the capital; but it is not true as to more remote portions of the Dominion. It is all very well for the hon. gentleman to talk about coming to the Railway Committee of the Privy Council; but suppose a difficulty arises in British Columbia, it is a very serious thing for a municipality to send a delegate or professional man all the way to Ottawa for the purpose of presenting their view of the matter before the Railway Committee of the Privy Council. It is not difficult for the railway company, because the railway companies, as a rule, have their solicitors on the spot. There is no gentleman here who has so little experience as not to know that the idea of any private individual or any poor municipality undertaking to go into litigation with a powerful railway company is almost absurd. It means entering upon interminable litigation. The hon. gentlemen who are opposed to this Bill have not put the matter fairly before the House. Their speeches leave the impression that the Bill enables municipalities to worry and annoy railway companies. If any hon.