

Subject.....

Date.....

sought to meet. Dr. Beland who spent three years in a German prison will tell you while we made our promises to the returned men we will stand proudly behind these promises and say proudly that we carried them out. (Loud applause.)

These things mean increased outlay. When we came into office the total amount that was being spent by the government to March 31, 1922, ran up to something like \$460,000,000 and we are only 9,000,000 of people.

#### Burdened Canada with Bankrupt Railway

It is an easy thing for Mr. Meighen and Senator Robertson to tell you that you have heavy taxes. They came to the government from their predecessors. We took up their burden. They spent lots of time talking about the railways. Who was it bought over a bankrupt system and landed it on the backs of this country but these very gentlemen? Where did we get our railway problem? In the United States when a railway system went into bankruptcy they would put it into

the hands of liquidators. Meighen and Borden took over the railways with all their debts and obligations, made them into one great big railway system, the largest in the world, and also with the largest debt. We have got to meet that debt and we have had to add something in expenditures.

Mr. Meighen says we have added so much every year to the cost of railways. We haven't spent as much in three years as Mr. Meighen spent in the preceding two years on the railways.

In the operation of the railways under his administrations there were deficits in the two years he was at the head of affairs, and there have been surpluses since. (Loud applause).

#### Reduction of Debt.

Despite these difficulties, despite the magnitude of the problem we have been able to reduce the public debt of our country. During the two years Mr. Meighen was in he added \$174,000,000 over and above the amount due to the war. In the time we have had office we have reduced it by several million dollars. (Loud applause).

In regard to the railways. It has always been a custom of great government utilities to keep those accounts entirely separate from the ordinary business of the government. The hydro-electric system in Ontario

is not included as part of the government accounts of the Province. When Sir Robert Borden and Mr. Meighen and other men were in office they didn't include the railways in the ordinary accounts. The same men who made up the books for them have made them up for us. There is no difference in any particular.

While we don't include these great sums on the railways in our public debt, they are part of the obligations of the country. They will have to be met some time. We can't go on in this country with a system of national railways capitalized in the way this system is, without taking that whole railway problem in hand in a manner that will serve the interest of the road and the people alike.

#### Joint Control of Railways.

We have the C. N. R. and the C. T. R. competing side by side, doing many things through competition which means large expenditure, which might be saved in part. We believe the time has come in Canada when these two railway systems should be subject to some form of joint control at the instance of the State, to avoid waste and unnecessary duplication, affect economy, and help thereby to reduce this great vast debt, and serve the interest of the road and the people at the same time. That is one of the first questions we intend to take up when we return to office after the 29th.

#### High Protection.

I want to deal more particularly with the chief question that must be brought before you, according to Mr. Meighen. Mark this, we don't say it is the chief question. We say there are a lot of problems which the people have got to consider. Mr. Meighen says the only question in this election is the tariff issue, the only real question is this matter of high protection he talks about. Take him at his word, his own pronouncement with regard to the present election. You are called upon to judge whether or not we should have higher protection than we have at the present time. That may sound pretty well in some parts of Ontario and Quebec, in the great industrial centres. That is where it is particularly directed. He thinks he is going to get a large return to the House of Commons on account of his policy of high protection. I don't think that policy will go down in this part of the Dominion if the people understand the facts of it. What you have to decide in this contest is what is going to be best in your own interest. You have got a chance now to say whether or not you are going to be helping yourselves by supporting one particular policy or another.

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

Speeches-1922 - 1932

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