

were given. The whole of that expensive Ontario-Quebec system was constructed under legislation of the former Liberal Government. It is absolutely true that, having got their charter from the Laurier administration, the promoters of the Canadian Northern system went to the British Columbia government and, for the purpose, as I think, of evading Dominion regulation, constructed that remaining link through that province under legislation granted by the provincial government. There is no question about that.

Mr. GRAHAM: Hear, hear.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: There is also no question about the bond guarantees and the construction grants which these sections of the system got.

Mr. GRAHAM: Not in British Columbia.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Oh, they were appalling. I do not know whether my hon. friend is responsible for them.

Mr. GRAHAM: I say not in British Columbia.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I believe they got that chiefly from the local government.

Mr. GRAHAM: Not chiefly, but wholly until the Conservative Government came into power.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: My hon. friend is entitled to that bit of encouragement.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is a very important distinction.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Let him have it. But what does he say about the Government that with this line arranged for, with the charters standing, chooses deliberately to build a third line, paralleling the two existing lines, at its own cost in part and entirely on its own authority. Why, Mr. Speaker, there may be some room for argument that this country could support, and would support, two transcontinental lines; but when the Laurier administration embarked upon the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific they embarked upon a project which committed this country to three transcontinental lines, and I cannot find appropriate parliamentary language to properly describe such an act.

Let us see if that is an over-statement. The charter for the line from Edmonton to Vancouver was granted four years prior to the Grand Trunk Pacific project. It is true it was built under another charter;

but the right to build was there. From Dauphin, Manitoba, to Edmonton, the charter was granted one year prior to the Grand Trunk Pacific project. From North Bay to Port Arthur the charter was also granted one year prior to the Grand Trunk Pacific project. There is another very extraordinary circumstance which shows that the administration of that time had a belief in the idea that three transcontinental railways could be supported by this country, because the charter for the line from Montreal to French river was given by that administration after the Grand Trunk Pacific project had been launched.

Well, construction goes on, guarantees are given, and millions of dollars of public money are placed at the disposal of the promoters of these railways. Then 1911 comes along, and with construction largely carried out, governments everywhere committed, the moneys in the hands of trustees—all this done, it is now suggested that we ought to have stopped. If ever there was something which goes beyond eleventh-hour repentance, something which occurs just before the end of everything, you have it in that suggestion.

I wonder if some of the eminent legal gentlemen on the other side will later give us the benefit of their views. If they do, we shall perhaps be told in what manner the Dominion could legally have interfered with a matter directly involving property and civil rights; involving the issue of bonds, the placing of money in the hands of trustees, the liabilities of provinces and even of the Dominion itself. But the suggestion could not have been intended to be taken seriously. The hon. member for Pictou says that because we did these things we are responsible for everything. But what would he have had us do? Did he want the settlers who had been induced to come to this country left without the transportation service which they were assured they would have, left without any way of getting out their crops or getting in their food supplies? What would he do with regard to the many villages and communities which would be without railway communication? What would he do with the commitments here and there and everywhere? What would he do with the large government guarantees, Dominion and provincial? He knows very well that there was just one thing to do: to carry on as best we could; to make the best of the exceedingly bad situation that had been created for us.