

was in favour of the government scheme and approved of it. He was in a better position to understand the question than most members of either house of parliament, and he declared, in the most open and unreserved way, his approval of the route selected and of the general character of the agreement. It is true that we have had indications recently that the views of the hon. gentleman, as expressed on three or four different occasions, and expressed without any reservation at all to the representatives of important newspapers, are not the views expressed by some of the hon. gentleman's followers. It has occurred to me that possibly, in the case of the hon. gentleman who now leads the Conservative party, and who succeeded the hon. gentleman who leads the opposition in this House, there may be developing some kind of combination which the hon. leader of this House designated as a nest of traitors. I notice that two of the gentlemen who were conspicuous on the former occasion have been very active in their condemnation of the route and contract which their present leader had cordially endorsed. I have said enough to show that the government were obliged to take some steps such as they have taken, and that the route they selected was on the whole the best they could have selected. Not the weakest reason for thinking so is the view that was taken by the present leader of the opposition in the other House of parliament. That of course is all subject to this condition: is the agreement for the use of this route and for the construction of the railway by this route, fair and reasonable in its terms? That of course we can only gather from looking at it. I do not propose to deal at any length with the different paragraphs of the agreement. At this stage, that would not be fair. The first paragraph in the contract contains one provision to which I shall direct attention:

The said railway, when fully completed, to be of the general standard and gauge of the Kaslo and Slocan Railway, in British Columbia, and according to the specifications to be approved by the Minister or Railways.

As I understand, the Kaslo and Slocan Railway carries very heavy loads of minerals, and the rails are 45 lb. rails, and not 30 lb.

Hon. Mr. PROWSE—What is the gauge?

Hon. Mr. POWER—Three feet or three feet six. The specifications are to be ap-

proved by the Minister of Railways. It would be impossible to construct a broad gauge railway in the time the company have, and it is said this Kaslo and Slocan Railway carries very heavy loads. The contract also provides that while the railway is to be the property of the company, it is to be subject to inspection and approval by an engineer to be named by the government before being accepted by the government. There is provision made for the extension of the road northward to Dawson City, and for an extension of the road south to an open port in British Columbia. There is also provision made for building branch lines, but the right shall not be exercised without the consent of the Governor in Council. I think that is a wise provision, because after having this road built on a route, which we think to the best advantage of Canada, it may not be desirable that a road should be built to Lynn Canal across United States territory. The fourth paragraph of this agreement is one to which objection has been taken, but in my humble judgment it is one to which no reasonable objection can be raised:

For five years from the 1st September, 1898, no line of railway shall be authorized by parliament to be constructed from Lynn Canal or thereabouts, or from any point at or near the international boundary between Canada and Alaska into the Yukon district, and for five years from said date no aid in land or money shall be granted to any person or company other than the contractors and the contractors' company to assist in building any such railway.

Having selected this route as the one most beneficial to Canada, it would be inconsistent and unwise on the part of the government to allow the construction of a road through United States territory to Lynn Canal and other points where our United States neighbours would have more advantages over us than they have in connection with the route proposed by this contract. The next paragraph, which is also supposed to be monopolistic in its character, is not objectionable:

The contractors and the contractors' company shall be entitled to receive in preference to any other person or company during ten years from the said 1st of September, 1898, such aid or assistance in land or money as the government may be authorized and may see fit to grant in aid of a line of railway from the Stikine River to an ocean port in British Columbia, provided that the contractors or contractors' company are willing to undertake the construction of the same at once, and completion thereof within a reasonable time, upon receiving notice thereof from the government.

It would be eminently unfair and injudicious to authorize another company to