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NATIONAL TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY

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SPEECH

BY

HON. W. S. FIELDING

FINANCE MINISTER

OTTAWA, CANADA
ORIGINAL NO.
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MONTREAL

HON. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). Mr. Speaker, one year is but a short time in the life of a country, a parliament or a government, but sometimes it happens that within so short a space events occur which have much to do with the making of history. About one year ago it became publicly known that this government had entered into negotiations with some gentlemen of eminence in the railway world for the construction of a second transcontinental railway, and we shall do well if we look back in our mind's eye and recall the manner in which that proposal was first met. True, the matter had not yet been submitted to parliament, but parliament was advised by incidental remarks in this House and in the discussion in the Railway Committee upon the charter of the company which proposed to enter upon this work, and in the public press, of the views of the opponents of the government, and I am justified in saying that the general view of the opposition was against any proposal for the construction of another transcontinental railway.

UNREASONABLE AND UNFAIR OPPOSITION.

We were asked in the House and in the press, sometimes in triumphant tones, where was the mandate for this government to enter upon these negotiations for the building of another transcontinental railway? We were told in the Conservative press, and in the committee in this House that the people who were undertaking to devise means and ways for the construction of another transcontinental railway were simply unscrupulous company promoters whose aim was to make a raid on the public treasury. That was the attitude of the opposition less than a year ago. At that time, it was not a question of details. The bargain had not then been consummated. The contract had not been entered into. We were only at the first stage of the matter. But the idea that the government was prepared to enter into negotiations with eminent railway men for the construction of another transcontinental railway was met with taunts and jeers and with the statement that we were simply endeavoring to promote