

Hon. Mr. GORDON: If that question is addressed to me, in view of present conditions I would say it should not be done. I think the only possible excuse for building a link with our National road is to get feeders for business where there is absolutely no other railway now.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Honourable gentlemen, one would naturally suppose that when the Government of the day at this, the eleventh hour of the Session, brought down this Bill for our consideration, particularly after Parliament had been in Session since the 31st of January last—a Bill involving, according to the schedule, an expenditure of at least \$28,000,000—the Senate would have been furnished with such information as to satisfy themselves at least that there was some public demand for the undertakings which have been set out in the Bill.

There is a well-established practice in Parliament that when public moneys are voted the fullest information should be furnished by the Government and presented to Parliament; and not only that that information should be furnished, but that Parliament should be fully seized of the importance and advisability and necessity of proceeding with such an expenditure as is involved in this measure.

It was with the greatest surprise that this Chamber and in fact the House of Commons itself learned of the retention of this Bill in the hands of the Government until the eve of prorogation. Now entirely apart from the paucity of information—I will not even say the paucity, but I will say the utter absence of information—I should like to refer for a moment to a well-established parliamentary practice which has obtained from Confederation down to the present time touching the vote of public moneys, particularly in regard to the building of railways; and I would say to my honourable friend, in dealing with that phase of the question, that he will not find upon the Statute Book of the Dominion of Canada any precedent for what is submitted to us to-night. It has been the practice of Parliament, without exception, that the Government of the day should place upon the Table of Parliament or in the Estimates a statement of the specific sums required for the building of such undertaking's, and furnish Parliament with all necessary information. Furthermore, if the undertaking was not proceeded with, if the money was not expended during the fiscal year, the money would lapse, and Parliament would have the opportunity of again pronouncing upon the subject. Not only that, but Parliament would have the

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND.

right, and has always exercised the right, of supervising with the minutest scrutiny the expenditure and application of every dollar which Parliament had voted for such purposes.

Now, we have had submitted to us, honourable gentlemen, a Bill which proposes apparently, to hand over to the National Railway Board the powers which hitherto have been exercised by Parliament. We are practically asked to abdicate those powers to this Board—of whom we know very little, and what we know is not very favourable—the extraordinary power of administering, entirely irrespective of Parliament, a fund which, as I hope to show very shortly, will be not short of \$100,000,000.

Do honourable gentlemen know enough of the Canadian National Railway Board to entrust them with the expenditure of the public moneys of Canada? Have they demonstrated, since they came into office, their ability to administer an undertaking of the magnitude of the Canadian National system? Have they improved in the slightest degree upon their predecessors? And are you satisfied, is Parliament satisfied, are the people of this country satisfied, to hand over to those gentlemen—irresponsible gentlemen, men who are not in any sense responsible to Parliament, who have never distinguished themselves as administrators of business, as men capable of handling a situation such as this that presents itself to the public—the enormous expenditure involved in this Bill?

This Bill proposes that we should hand this power over absolutely to the Government of Canada—not the Parliament of Canada; that we should entirely eliminate for three years all Parliamentary action touching the construction of those roads, and touching the application and expenditure of the moneys; and, notwithstanding the fact that those moneys may not be expended this year or the following year, Parliament will be helpless in making any inquiry or any scrutiny whatsoever into the application of such expenditures.

Now, may I direct the attention of honourable gentlemen to section 7 of the Bill, and, for the purpose of better understanding it, may I read it? In view of the few remarks that I desire to make after reading it, I draw attention to the fact that this is the joker in the Bill. Honourable gentlemen who have participated in well-known games will understand what an important role the joker plays in some of our national amusements:

The mileage of the said lines of railway and the cost of construction thereof, as mentioned or referred to in the schedule to this Act, are merely estimated distances and costs for the information of Parliament, and shall not be taken to restrict the Minister in the issuance of