

lished and opened up a complete system from ocean to ocean.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what does that mean? Here we have the Grand Trunk Pacific proposing to build a line from Port Simpson to North Bay. They point out to the government that they would have the advantage, as they call it—and it certainly would be an enormous advantage—of the connections through Ontario and Quebec of the existing Grand Trunk Railway, whereby, of course, they would reach Montreal. And, under clause 8 they tell the government that they were ready to make such arrangements that their traffic arriving at Montreal would there be turned over to the Intercolonial. Why, Sir, to say that that is not an important matter for this House to consider when discussing this transcontinental railway is merely trifling with words. There could be nothing more important, I venture to say, in the whole of the discussion we had last year, than the fact that the Grand Trunk Pacific were prepared to build to North Bay or to a point north of North Bay, and that, as to such traffic as should come through Ontario and arrive at Montreal, instead of its being left open to the great risk—the more than risk, the absolute certainty—of most of it going to Portland, they would enter into an arrangement with the government whereby it should go over the Intercolonial to Canadian seaports. Why, Sir, that was the very thing we were spending weeks in contending for, and if that document had been produced, we should have been able to show that the government had had submitted to them. Yet, we are told that nothing in this document affected the question. What did the Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding) say?

I want to know was there anything in that correspondence—

That is what he calls this petition.

—which, if it had been brought down would have been of any service to hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House?

Why, what could have been of more service than the production of these two clauses to show that it was within the power of the government to arrange that every pound of traffic that should go over the Grand Trunk Pacific to Montreal would be secured for Canadian ports? He says:

Is there anything in it which would have helped them in the discussion?

Well, I think if we had had an opportunity of using it the hon. gentleman would have heard the proposal discussed pretty fully.

This document proposed arrangements for the construction of a railway from the Pacific to North Bay, subsidized by the country, and it proposed the use of the Grand Trunk thence to Montreal, with arrangements to deliver the traffic to the Intercolonial Railway for carriage from Montreal to the Atlantic ports through Canadian territory—and

all this he thinks did not concern us. Is there anything in it, he says, which could have helped them in the discussion?

The right hon. gentleman adds:

This confidential letter was in my own possession. This is the explanation which I have to give to my hon. friends.

And that is the only explanation we get for the non-production of a document of such vast importance.

The hon. the Finance Minister, shortly after reading the document in full to this House, said:

We have not been dealing with any scheme touched by that document whatever.

He seems to have given so little heed to the discussion with regard to the danger of the diversion of the traffic from Canadian to American ports, that he could not see that these clauses, 8 and 9, had any bearing upon the subject. Well, I must say that when ministers pass over matters of that kind so lightly, I am not surprised that we have found so many 'blunders' in this agreement from beginning to end. The hon. gentleman says his reason for not producing it was that it was a confidential document. Well, it is true that at the head of the copy of this document which has been read to the House there certainly is the word 'confidential,' but in such a matter as this, had the government any right to accept from any body of people a document containing such a proposition, to entertain that proposition, and to conceal it from parliament? What right has a government to deal in such a way with public matters? If the right hon. gentleman did not feel at liberty to treat that proposition as a business proposal should be treated by the government, why did he not return it to them and say: I cannot entertain it? He could have done that, and then he could have said to parliament: I did receive a proposition, but it was marked 'confidential,' and knowing my duty to parliament and to the country I refused to entertain it, and I returned it. There could be no objection to that. But the hon. gentleman, although he says he did not entertain it, told us in answer to the question I put the other day, that it was entertained, that is to say, that it was submitted to the cabinet. We have not yet seen the answer sent by the government to these gentlemen. I presume when the government receives a written application of that kind they do not give a verbal answer. I presume there was an answer to that application. How is it that that answer has not been brought down? The hon. gentleman read the document to the House after obtaining Mr. Hays's permission, and yet he does not read the answer. Surely we ought to have everything. And what more, I ask, is there behind all this? Must we drag every paper out of the hon. gentleman? Are we to cross-examine him? Surely that is not