

name to 'Great Northern Transit Company,' not proven, be referred back to the said committee for further consideration.

He said: I have no wish to refer the Bill back to the committee for reconsideration on the merits of the question that has been discussed before the committee. The Bill as originally introduced provided for certain railway connections between the waters of Hudson's Bay and the Mackenzie river. Application was made for an extension of time for the completion of the work, and for the privilege of making a further connection between Lake Superior and Hudson's Bay. In the committee, the discussion was on the application to make connection between Lake Superior and Hudson's Bay, and that application was refused by the committee. We have no wish to renew the application so far as that point is concerned. We merely ask that the Bill in its original shape, providing for connection between the waters of Hudson's Bay and the Mackenzie river be allowed the ordinary extension of time.

The PRIME MINISTER (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier). I am sorry to be obliged to say that, for my part, I cannot agree to the hon. gentleman's motion. The question has been brought to the attention of the House, and, in the ordinary course of parliamentary procedure, has been referred to the Railway Committee, where it has been considered, with the result that the proposal has been rejected by the committee. The position that the government have always taken in matters of this kind is to support the decision of the Railway Committee, unless very strong reason is shown to the contrary, unless substantial injustice has been done or gross error has been committed. When the question has been considered in all its aspects in the committee to which it has been referred, and a conclusion has been reached, I have always thought it safest for the House to uphold the decision of the committee. If we review the judgment of the committee in these matters; we are apt to be led into error. Without looking into the merits of the motion, since it revives, even though in modified form, a question already decided by the committee, I shall feel it my duty to oppose the motion and maintain the decision of the committee.

Mr. SEYMOUR E. GOURLEY (Colchester). I have no interest in the Bill whatever, but I took an interest in the discussion of the matter in committee; and while I would accept the principle laid down by the Prime Minister, that the decision of the committee should be accepted, yet, I understand the hon. member for Alberta (Mr. Oliver) does not seek to conflict with that principle. The discussion in committee was confined to the proposed connection between Lake Superior and James Bay, and the rest of the Bill, providing for an extension from

Hudson's Bay west to the Pacific, was not considered. Now, the hon. gentleman proposes, as the judgment of the committee was given upon that subject, to accept it; but, as the other question was not discussed, to refer it to the committee for a decision. With all deference to the Prime Minister, I think that if he would reconsider the matter, he would not feel it his duty, to disagree with the proposition.

The PRIME MINISTER. If the House will bear with me—the report of the committee, as I understand it, was that the preamble of the Bill had not been proven. That being so, the assumption is that the whole question was considered, and the conclusion came to that the charter could not be granted. To adopt this resolution must be to revise the decision of the Railway Committee.

Mr. DAVID HENDERSON (Halton). In general terms I am prepared to assent to what the Prime Minister says, that we ought to be guided by the action of the Railway Committee. But, I think that it will be within the recollection of this House that only a few weeks ago the principle laid down by the First Minister was not recognized. Strong reasons being shown why the action of the Railway Committee should not be sustained, the House felt quite justified in dealing with the subject in a manner different from the manner recommended by the Railway Committee. I have in my recollection one case where private interests and public interests were affected, yet the First Minister himself assisted in pushing that Bill through to a third reading without allowing the parties to be heard. I was present in the Railway Committee when the Bill which is now under discussion was defeated. It was, practically, not defeated on its merits—I think that might quite fairly be said. It was simply defeated on the ground that the promoter of the Bill had had a former charter over a portion of the same route, and had disposed of it to another man, and now he is seeking for a charter, not over the same ground, but probably 150 or 200 miles away from his former line. Now, I have thought over that matter very carefully since, and I am not sure but that we made a serious mistake, and I for one am always prepared to remedy a mistake when I think I have made one. I think I made a mistake on that occasion, and I am prepared to support the motion of the hon. member for Alberta (Mr. Oliver) to refer this Bill back to the Railway Committee for further consideration. After having told Mr. Harvey, the promoter of the Bill, that we did not believe in charter selling, and warned him in that way, and punished him, I think we should be prepared to deal with this question on its merits.

Mr. N. A. BELCOURT (Ottawa). I think the motion made by the member for Alberta