

there must be some duty resting upon the government in respect to the expenditure of the people's money. It is all very well to say that we have prosperous times now, it is all very well for the Finance Minister to say that we have a flowing treasury—that is all very acceptable, and is appreciated by the people of Canada. But notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, the people of this country expect that their money should be expended in a business-like manner, and with that in view they have spoken out in very loud tones, I think, judging from the large number of petitions that have been presented from day to day, signed by hundreds and hundreds of electors belonging to both sides of politics. I think it is proper that a copy of these petitions should be placed upon the 'Hansard,' and I propose, with the kind indulgence of the House, to read it. It deals with the subject of the resolution which I have moved, because it asks for an estimate of the cost of this proposed railway.

To the Honourable

The Senate and House of Commons of Canada,  
In Parliament assembled.

The petition of the undersigned electors of the Dominion of Canada humbly sheweth:

1. That a wise and prudent solution of the great question of transportation is of the utmost importance as regards the future of this Dominion.
2. That your petitioners are of opinion that it would be unwise and imprudent to take definite action until the government and parliament are fully possessed of the information essential to a proper decision of that question.
3. That the country is not possessed of such information; that the government has appointed a commission to investigate and report upon the whole subject of transportation.
4. That a project of such magnitude should not be undertaken without the most complete and accurate surveys, under the direction and control of engineers of standing and repute.
5. That such surveys should be in the hands of the government and of parliament before the credit of the Dominion is committed to an enterprise which involves enormous obligations.
6. That those obligations cannot properly be estimated before such surveys shall have been made.
7. That, however, the most competent men are of the opinion that the cost of the projected line between Winnipeg and Moncton will reach the enormous amount of upwards of \$120,000,000.
8. That no evidence has been adduced so far during the long discussion that has taken place to establish that such a large expenditure of public money will cheapen the freight rates for the products of the west, or establish more satisfactory communication between the different parts of the Dominion.
9. That, on the contrary, it is greatly to be feared that by pledging the credit of the country to such a vast extent, the government will make it impossible to carry out works better calculated to meet the transportation needs of the country.
10. That the government, parliament and taxpayers should have an opportunity to learn the results of the investigation of the said com-

mission; and to examine the evidence upon which such results were arrived at.

Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that the said Bill now before parliament may not now become law; but that its further consideration by the government and by parliament shall be deferred until such full and accurate information shall have been obtained and laid before parliament.

That is a copy of the petitions that are being presented to this House by the hundreds within the last few weeks. Some little effort has been made on the other side of the House to cast reflection upon the genuineness of the signatures to some of these petitions. I may remind our hon. friends opposite that from every section, almost from every county, have come petitions from the farmers who have put their names to these documents, making the reasonable request that before their money is expended the government should apply to this enterprise the same business principles that any private company would apply to its own business. I have no hesitation in saying that the electors who signed these petitions are responsible citizens—we have seen them coming from the great metropolis of Montreal this morning signed by 5,000 electors of that great city—surely these deserve some consideration by the government.

We are asked to construct this road without proper estimates. The right hon. first minister has laid upon the Table a Blue-book, that has been occasionally referred to in this discussion. I do not propose to make any extended reference to it, only to read one short paragraph in respect to the timber. It has been frequently alleged in this House by hon. gentlemen opposite that this road ought to be constructed through the northern part of the provinces of Quebec and Ontario for the purpose of developing timber limits and the timber resources of those regions. Here is a paragraph from the report of Mr. Ogilvie, D.L.S., 1891, addressed to the Minister of the Interior, in which he makes this statement:

If the timber on all the other rivers flowing into the bay is no more important than that I saw on the Abitibi, I would hesitate as to the timber resources of that district being valuable; for though it is all thickly wooded, only a small percentage of it (along the river at least) is large enough for merchantable lumber.

So you see that this gentleman says that the timber limits of that section of the provinces of Quebec and Ontario to which reference is made in this Blue-book, are not so valuable as the members of the government would lead us to believe. Now, in so far as the transportation of wheat is concerned, I wish to give one short quotation from a speech of the First Minister when discussing the transportation question last session. On page 958 of the 'Hansard' of 1902, I find he made this statement:

But, unfortunately, there is a rugged section along the shores of Lake Superior which hardly admits of wheat being commercially carried through.