

ment to the Grand Trunk Pacific because of the taking up of these rails? They surely are entitled to be paid for the rails and they are entitled to payment for the loss accruing. There should be some means of arriving at the cost.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: It does not occur to me that it will have any material bearing upon the amount of this estimate because the damages, if any, are quite indefinite and they may be set off for some advantage. It is obviously impossible to make a definite statement as to what the financial consequences would be of the transaction in question, and unless some definite information were had, which cannot well be had at this time, it does not occur to me that it will have a bearing on the question of the amount which Parliament should vote for the purpose of enabling the Grand Trunk Pacific to operate as a going concern during the next year.

Mr. OLIVER: I do not wish to discuss too intimately with the minister that point, but I would think it would have a very important bearing, first, upon the amount of money that would be at the disposal of the company during this current year, and, second, on their facilities for operation. On that point, I am in a position to inform the committee that the difference in the cost of operating is a matter of 250 tons per freight train; that is, the Grand Trunk Pacific can haul five cars of freight less with the road as it is now than it could haul with the road as it was. That is one item that is entitled to consideration. Generally speaking, the transaction is one of such a very remarkable character that I think the country is entitled to a great deal more definite information in regard to it than it has yet received. I cannot conceive of any occasion upon which it would be more appropriate to place that information before the House and the country than during the consideration of this item. Many hundreds of people have been put to great damage, inconvenience and loss, aside altogether from the railway company. Business enterprise in that locality has been seriously impeded. I am prepared to say that not a rail has gone forward to France that has been taken from that track and I am assured that not a rail will go forward to France, first because the shipping facilities are required for food and ammunition, and second, because the rails are not suitable or desired in France, they being very much heavier than are required.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: The information which I have is that 100 miles of rails have

been taken from the Grand Trunk Pacific and that they are either in France or on the ocean and that in the east 30 miles have been taken west of Three Rivers. As to the rails taken up on the National Transcontinental railway, they are all in France. I may say to my hon. friend, that, while I know that this matter arises in his constituency, I have never been able to understand his attitude towards this taking up of rails. There is no one who is more loyal or has a better appreciation of this war and what it means than my hon. friend. I put to him the question: If an urgent request came from the British Government "We want rails and we want the Dominion Government to give them to us," would my hon. friend give them or would he not? That is the position with which we are confronted. Supposing that there is inconvenience, supposing that damage has resulted, does my hon. friend mean to say that this Government should hesitate to take up rails and send them over to France? I do not know whether my hon. friend has been at the front or not. I was at the front and I saw that if there was anything that was needed at the front last fall it was rails in order to get the guns up. What happened at Loos? What happened at other places? They might launch the fire of their artillery and destroy the trenches of the enemy but when they came to follow up they found that no headway could be made because the big guns could not be moved forward quickly enough to destroy the reserve trenches. The Germans might be driven off the first and second line trenches but it was absolutely necessary to move the guns up quickly and to do that they required heavy rails. Light rails were of no use for the purpose. They could bring up supplies of a certain character with light rails but to bring up the heavy guns they needed heavy rails. This is something that I will defend any place in Canada. It needs no defence. When we were informed that the British Government needed heavy rails we said that these rails should go forward and we proceeded to tear them up. The Minister of Railways said he would tear up half the rails in Canada to supply transport for the men at the front; so would I, and I would not hesitate about it. What does it matter about tearing up the rails, if it is going to save the lives of our noble soldiers. The boys at the front are being decimated; they are suffering great hardships, and dying, and, forsooth, because it is going to cause some inconvenience, it is said we should not forward the rails. I have not been able to understand my