

purchase, cost \$2,045,433, and earns \$795 per mile. It is in the general interests of Canada to enter upon a policy of Intercolonial extension which will involve the acquisition by the country of an additional 3,000 miles of national railway that cost \$19,452,000? What will Quebec, Ontario, and the Western Provinces have to say about this scheme? From its opening onwards the Intercolonial has been a bill of expense to the Dominion. The record of that is not favourable to the proposal of adding to its system a number of branches which, however serviceable to their localities, could not be profitably acquired by the Dominion. The Government should keep out of the Railway business as much as possible.

THE MONTREAL CITY BILL AND THE QUEBEC LEGISLATURE.

Although a determined attempt was made to induce the Legislature to reject the Bill granting the City of Montreal permission to make temporary provision for its financial needs in 1898, it was passed on the last day of the Session. This Act was so obviously one in the interests of the City, it is surprising that it met with such opposition. We can only account for this by assuming that its opponents had not the city's interests at heart, or they were not familiar with what those interests required. The action of the delegates who went to Quebec, consisting of the President of the Board of Trade, bankers and others, was highly commendable, the more so as they were not unanimous in approval of all the clauses of the Bill. But after conference with the Mayor, the City Treasurer, and others, they strongly supported the measure being aware that, if amendments had not been introduced at that late hour, the Bill could not have been passed. Having carefully studied the situation, we have no hesitation in declaring that the Legislative Council acted in the best interests of all concerned when they agreed to pass the Bill.

WIRE PULLING AT QUEBEC.

To any disinterested person it must be surprising to observe the wire-pulling which goes on during the Session. One visitor to the Legislative Chamber, after a few days observation was led to seriously ask: Whether the members were elected to look after their own and their friends' interests? The number of private bills giving powers to individuals and corporations antagonistic to the interests and rights of municipalities, and of the Province, was simply appalling. It is difficult to understand how the Legislature can listen seriously to a few private individuals who wish legislation enabling them to control the property of the City, or who ask powers compelling the City to purchase their own property, or to have it improved at the City's expense. Yet no less than three bills passed

THE PRIVATE BILLS COMMITTEE.

of the Legislative Assembly, which the accredited representatives of the City and the public generally opposed. The Legislative Council, however, showed its superior wisdom and capacity as a legislative body by rejecting these obnoxious measures, and by its independence of cliques and lobbyists showed, as it has done in the past, the necessity of this Province having an Upper House. It has been thought that it was beyond the power of the Legislature to give special privileges to speculators or corporations to enable them to take practical possession of the property vested in the citizens of various municipalities in this Province. It would seem, however, that there are members of the Legislature who consider they have the power to give the control of streets for the purpose of building conduits, erecting poles, etc., to any persons upon whom they choose to confer this privilege, which is to be used for their private gain, however contrary to the public convenience. This idea is opposed to the very basal principle of self-government embodied in our municipal system, and the sooner the people of this Province give their representatives to understand that such an invasion of their rights will not be tolerated the better it will be for all concerned. As an illustration of how far some persons are ready to stretch the prerogative of the Legislature, there was a Bill introduced giving one party to a contract permission to break it without any arrangement with the second party to the contract! In this case a clause was added by the Upper House requiring the assent of both parties before the contract could be annulled, an action which afforded further evidence of the higher tone and intelligence of the Legislative Council.

A REFORM SUGGESTED.

We would respectfully suggest that the Private Bills Committee of the Legislative Assembly might be improved. This Committee should consist of the leading members of the Assembly, including some of the Ministers and leaders of the Opposition. It is only too evident that the importance of the work entrusted to this Committee is not realized. As it is at present constituted, and as its affairs are now conducted, it has been characterised as "a perfect farce," as well as a source of public danger, and a discredit to the Assembly. The facility with which obnoxious bills are liable to go through the House on the strength of their being endorsed by the Private Bills Committee points to the necessity of that Committee being either abolished or so remodelled as to be worthy of the dignity of the Legislature of this Province. During the Session over 100 Acts were passed, and as many thrown out. The people are to be congratulated upon a mass of ill-digested and dangerous legislation having been rejected last Session, by the Legislative Council, which again more than justified its existence by its statesmanlike independence, intelligence and regard for the public interests.