

well-known fact that in eastern Nova Scotia the grades of the Canadian Government railways, now the Canadian National lines, are extremely heavy and it was intended not only to serve a local purpose, such as outlined to-day, but it was intended—and I venture to say that this was the main purpose of the vote, whether it was political or not does not matter—to improve the main line, to serve the industries and to provide a direct connection between the Canadian West, Montreal and Great Britain. The local connection was merely incidental. But that is not this proposal at all. This proposal is to build a branch line from a little village called Sunnysbrae to the small town of Guysborough, a town which I venture to say has not a population of a thousand people. And yet we are asked to vote \$3,500,000 without a word from the traffic experts of this railway. Now, it is not fair to parliament to ask members to vote this amount of money for the extension of the present branch line, unless we have it down on the basis of dollars and cents. No one has stated in this House that this line would pay, even in the dim, distant future. No one has given us an estimate in dollars and cents of any proposed earnings. No one has given us a statement of what the cost of operation may be compared with the capital expenditure. I do think that before the government or the National Railways ask parliament to vote a large sum of money like this, they should take parliament into their confidence, so that we shall know whether this is a business proposition or whether it is a proposition to assist a community that has been declining for years, if that be the case, or whether it is simply on the basis of giving service to a community that has not had service. Everybody will agree that this county has not had railway service, but there has been a reason for it—it would never pay, and nobody ever thought it would. Any construction of lines there would simply be a detriment and a liability to the national lines rather than an asset. Will the minister say that a single one of the present branch lines in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia would to-day be justified on the basis of their being an asset to the National Railways?

Mr. GRAHAM: They were taken over, though, by the late government.

Mr. HANSON: That is no answer, although it is the argument that is always used—"you did this" or "you did that." That is no justification for my hon. friend's government. In New Brunswick the management to-day are endeavouring to institute

a system of electric operation by motor cars in order to keep down the tremendous deficits on these branch lines. Yet we are told that the management are asking for a capital expenditure of three and a half million dollars to add to the already enormous toll that these branch lines are taking out of the system. There is no doubt about that; I have one in my county, a little line of six miles that serves a much more prosperous community, I venture to say, than even the Garden of Eden in my hon. friend's constituency. It is known as the York and Carleton railway and runs through the parish of Stanley. It cost \$24,000 a year to run that branch line under present conditions, and the revenues never exceed \$9,000. The management, therefore are quite justified in taking steps to decrease that drain on the earnings of the national lines. I venture to say that this proposal will simply be an exaggerated case of the York and Carleton railway. I do suggest to the minister that before he goes further with this resolution he obtain from the traffic department of the railway a frank statement of the possibilities; then let us try to look upon this matter from the point of view of business, not of politics, from the point of view of pure reason, not of expediency. Then let us ask ourselves the further question: If this road was not justified in 1916 because of the financial condition of the country, is it justified to-day?

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

After Recess

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. LEWIS: I wish to gain just a little information in regard to the resolution before us, and especially with respect to the expenditure of \$3,500,000. We heard a statement read this afternoon that the line when it shall be completed, that is, if an extra thirty miles were to be added to it, would cost in the neighbourhood of \$8,500,000, but I understood this would mean the line completed, with stations, sidings, and so forth. In this resolution we have the sum of only \$3,500,000, which is to cover the work for 67 miles, whereas the \$8,500,000 would complete the work on say 93.8 miles, as given by one hon. member opposite. I would like to know if this \$3,500,000 is the total cost in the first place of the railway with stations included.

I have also made a slight comparison between the cost of this line and other lines, and I find that this line is costing \$52,000