

THE RAILWAY POLICY of the McBRIDE GOVERNMENT

At the first session of his administration, in the early spring of 1904, Mr. McBride, in reply to a question from the Liberal benches in the Provincial Legislature as to whether the House would hold an extra session in the autumn of that year to discuss railway matters, stated that his Government would neither call the House together for such a special purpose, nor enter into any negotiations with respect to railway construction, unless the parties approaching the Government on such a subject were responsible men, possessed of the requisite capital and backing, and in every way equipped to carry out their undertakings.

This policy has been steadily held to by the Provincial Government ever since. No charter-mongers or promoters of paper railways, have been able to get the ear of the House, and the Government have waited till they were able to place before the people the present agreement with Mackenzie & Mann for the construction of the Canadian Northern in British Columbia.

The careful manner in which the interests of the people have been safeguarded in all railway matters, as in everything else, has been excellently shown by the Provincial Government's transactions with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Co. This company was authorized by Act of the Dominion Parliament to construct a transcontinental line through the Dominion of Canada—and was heavily paid for so doing. In the framing of the Act, however, provisions for construction in British Columbia were deliberately omitted, the railway company being left with a free hand to force what concessions it could out of this unprotected Province as a condition of building therein. They came to the Provincial Government and demanded a large land grant, cash subsidies, remission of taxation, and townsites. The Provincial Government refused to give away either the land or the money of the people, and continued firm, in spite of the pressure put upon them by the Dominion Government. The railway company accordingly started construction in every other province in Canada where their route lay, except British Columbia, in spite of the