

Mann or their representatives might appear and be questioned about the transaction, giving us, as one man to another, the condition in which the road stood or in which it stands to-day, so that we might know whether or not it was necessary for the people of this country to burden themselves with the enormous debt they are asked to assume. The Prime Minister said he would take the matter into consideration. This was in the early stages of the Bill. Nothing can be more satisfactory in negotiating a bargain of this kind than to have the parties face to face. Reports are good enough, but reports are prepared for a purpose. Reports are prepared and are put on the table of the House supporting the bargain and putting it in the best light it can possibly be put. There is not a man in this House who is doing business for himself who would be satisfied with information of that kind. For instance, if he were buying a house, or buying land, or buying a railway, he would ask the seller to come before him and lay all his cards on the table face up, and state clearly and definitely what was the nature of the transaction into which he asked the purchaser to enter. That would have been the proper course; that is what the people would have expected. I appeal to hon. gentlemen opposite along business lines, and I ask them if they are prepared to go back to their people and say: We have been asked to buy a railway which involves you in a debt, an undertaking on account of principal money, of something like \$650,000,000 and a yearly expenditure of something like \$30,000,000 or \$40,000,00 to keep the enterprise going. If they tell their people that story, and if their people are intelligent, as I presume they are, they will ask them: Have you inquired into this matter; what sort of a bargain have you made; are you getting value for the money that you are spending; is the transaction one in the interest of the Canadian people? And these hon. gentlemen will have to say in reply: We know nothing about it except what we have learned from the reports which have been laid on the Table. But nine-tenths of the hon. gentlemen who are voting for this Bill and supporting the Government have never read a line of these reports, or, if they have, they have not read enough to give them any conception of what kind of a bargain this is.

I submit that we have not the knowledge of this business that we should have before entering upon such a huge undertaking. I submit that this Parliament at this stage

[Mr. McKenzie.]

should not be entering upon this transaction. We were elected in 1911 to serve the people for five years and to look after the affairs of Canada. In 1911 such a question as the public ownership of railways was not before the people. There was not a word about it. I have no mandate to talk here upon any question, or to support legislation, or to impose new responsibilities on the people, with regard to matters that were never discussed when I was elected to this House. Up to the end of our five years' term there had been nothing said about the question of the public ownership of railways. Our terms were up and under ordinary conditions we should have gone back to the people for a new lease of power to ascertain what their will was. The plea upon which an extension of time was given to the Government is well known to the people. It was given for the purpose of looking after war conditions and nothing else except the ordinary routine business of the country. I submit, Sir, that we are here now by virtue of our own vote, by our own authority, and that we have no business to start out upon new and unbeaten paths and strike out upon a policy that never was submitted to the people. When this question came before the Government the business answer to the parties interested would have been: We are here by virtue of our own votes, we are here simply for a year helping along war conditions, and it is not our right to start out upon a new condition of things which was never submitted to, and never approved of, by the country. Instead of that, we are launched upon this new idea, this new experiment.

Hon. members from the province of Ontario have always said that the Intercolonial was a failure, that it was a millstone around the neck of the country, that it was a drain on the federal treasury, and I am sure that I can gather from their speeches that they would all be willing to get rid of that railway proposition. If that has been the experience of hon. members in this House with respect to the Intercolonial—I do not agree with their position at all—why then, without consulting the people, and with the meagre information we have before us, are we launched forth upon a project which means the taking not merely a line of the length of the Intercolonial but of nearly nine times the size and fifty times the obligation upon the treasury of this country which the acquisition of this road implies? That is a reason why we should not be launched upon this new idea and policy until we have had an