

Mr. VIEN: Verbal evidence.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The Drayton-Acworth report is before us, the very best expert opinion that could be adduced. That report has been before the House and the country for some three years. There is no reason to believe that, comparatively speaking, there has been any material deterioration of the road since that report was made. Hon. members themselves know of the general condition of the system about as well as they know of any physical fact in Canada. We all travel over the road regularly; we have grown up with it. We have before us, then, as well-founded, as thoroughly considered, as mature and as reliable report as any Parliament ever acted upon. We ourselves know the condition of the road as to Canada—not as experts, but, speaking generally, as ordinary intelligent citizens. As to the United States, we know that the American Government is bound to hand back in the condition in which they got it that part of the line which is in their territory when they choose to deliver up the possession of the railroads which have been under their administration. It is altogether impossible to assume that the American Government, operating that portion of the line which is in the United States is letting it go back and get into such a condition that it would be unsafe to operate or that its value would be so substantially detracted from as to render undependable for us the fundamental principles and features laid down in the Drayton-Acworth report.

It is true that when it did not appear that there was probability of a conclusion of the negotiations this session, an earlier prorogation was contemplated. But how does that affect the question? It is not contemplated now. We are here; we have as much time as we shall ever have; we have the whole fall before us. There is no reason why any hon. member should hurry himself in the least. The Government are not asking any hon. member to hurry himself. We will take all the time that is necessary to the fullest possible consideration of this question. Of course, if any hon. member or any person is opposed to a project, his first method of opposing it is to say: "Don't do it now; this is the wrong time." There never is a right time for the bringing on of an enterprise, in the opinion of any one who is opposed to it. Then, of course, the Opposition will say: "You are jamming it through; we are in the dying hours of the session." Well, let us be in the living hours. Let us get in the noon-day. There is plenty of time ahead

[Mr. Meighen.]

for the fullest consideration. It is not as if the proposal were new; it has been before the whole country since August, 1918—I am pretty sure that I have stated the month correctly. The proposal that is before us for acceptance has, in every substantial feature, been known to this Parliament through two sessions. We are here because the Grand Trunk at this moment has accepted our terms; we are here for the consideration of the matter as a Parliament. There is no surprise. To the best of my memory, not a single criticism has been offered in this House from either side to one single element or paragraph or sentence of the proposal offered to this House on the 11th July, 1918. Certainly Parliament has never been asked to pass unfavourably upon that proposal or upon either alternative suggested in it. It has never been suggested to Parliament or to the Government that the offer then made should be withdrawn or modified in any way. If ever a Parliament, therefore, came to deal with a question having had the amplest opportunity for consideration of it, that is the position of this Parliament at this time on this question. The Government's attitude is to invite—not only to invite, may I say, but to urge—the most studied deliberation of every feature of the proposal. Any information that it is possible for us to bring before Parliament—and we can bring all the necessary information—will be brought before it and the amplest time will be given for the review of that information and to enable hon. members to arrive at a conclusion thereupon.

Mr. VIEN: Yes, but when I put two questions bearing distinctly upon the main question at issue, I get evasive answers. My first question was this: If the American Government does not release the American connections of the Grand Trunk Railway system, where shall we be? Has the Government taken any steps to ascertain what the American Government is going to do? The minister says: "The hon. member knows that this is a private company; there is nothing changed in its ownership; it continues to be the Grand Trunk Railway Company and the American Government is not going to do anything so nasty as to cause us embarrassment." The House is not put in possession of the information that is necessary to an intelligent discussion of the matter now before it. We do not know what the American Government is going to do. If the American Government refuses to hand over the American connections of the Grand Trunk Railway system