

mittee is that the Grand Trunk Railway Company shall be enabled to acquire control, by the purchase of stock, of a connecting railway, the Canada Atlantic Railway. That Canada Atlantic Railway is a most important connection and feeder for traffic purposes of the government railways, and here is the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. E. M. Macdonald) deliberately asking parliament to sanction the acquisition by a rival company of that valuable connection; and the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. E. M. Macdonald) would have us believe that we, representing the country at large, have nothing to say to it; that this is merely a private affair between the Grand Trunk and the Canada Atlantic companies. If the hon. gentleman would just for a moment fancy himself the owner of a very considerable portion of stock of the Intercolonial Railway, and would suppose that he were asked to consider whether he should remain absolutely quiet in the face of an attempt of a rival company to the Intercolonial Railway to acquire control of an important connecting road, would he have nothing to say? Would he say it was none of his business, and that he must sit quiet and allow the two companies to complete their agreement, and then see what could be done with the combined company? Surely the Minister of Railways will not accept that kind of an argument, short as the time has been during which he has been the railway manager? His predecessor, after many years of experience in railway matters, thoroughly understood the importance of this Canada Atlantic Railway, and he wanted the government of Canada to own every inch of it. The hon. member for Pictou would ask us to sit here quietly and let this Bill go through, and enable this company which is in deadly rivalry, so far as commercial interests are concerned, with the government railways, to acquire the Canada Atlantic. Well, any ordinary business man who would do that sort of thing would be fit to go to a lunatic asylum. I do not say that offensively, and the hon. gentleman quite understands what I mean. I mean that if the hon. gentleman were connected in a commercial way with a business concern, and he were asked to remain quiescent while such a transaction was going on; if somebody suggested to him that he should not say anything till his competitors had their plans complete, he would say: 'Do you think I am an ass? Do you think I am a proper candidate for a lunatic asylum? Now is the time for me to intervene, and if by any possible means I can prevent this combination against my interests, prevent it I will.' That is the position I am presenting to the hon. gentleman, and I am quite sure the Minister of Railways will be with me in that.

Mr. E. M. MACDONALD. Then I am to understand that the hon. member for Hamilton (Mr. Barker) is opposing this Bill?

Mr. BARKER. I am opposing this Bill until I know what protection the government is obtaining, what protection the Minister of Railways contemplates in the public interest against what will be the result of this combination. Does the hon. gentleman object to that?

Mr. E. M. MACDONALD. If the hon. gentleman is desirous of opposing this Bill, I think he should say so frankly to the committee, because my hon. friend understands very well that the government have on the order paper a Bill which is intended to deal with the question of governmental rights in relation to this railway. If my hon. friend has any policy on that question, if he has any views upon the government's attitude on that question, he can oppose that Bill and take whatever course he likes, and he knows as an old railway man that the power rests in the government—and he can move in this parliament to have this power exercised—which would enable the government to take this railway if it is thought in the interests of the government to take it.

Mr. BARKER. My policy would be that the government should settle its own position first, and then consider what it would ask parliament to empower these two companies to do. But to just stand quietly by and let the horse be stolen and then go in and lock the door, is something of which I do not approve. I desire, now that we have had shown to us what is going on and what is contemplated, to know what the government is going to do for the protection of the people. Is there anything unfair in that? It seems to me that the government and the companies have put their heads together and that they are getting the cart before the horse. Let us know all that is to be done and what the outcome of all it will be, what effect the Bill is going to have on the Intercolonial Railway, then we will see just how much, in our judgment and discretion we, representing the people, can afford to do for the companies.

Mr. E. M. MACDONALD. Is the hon. gentleman's attitude that this Bill should not be passed at the present time, and that he proposes that the government railway Bill should be considered by the House before this Bill should be allowed to pass?

Mr. BARKER. I propose—and that is the reason I asked that the minister should be present before we began the discussion—I propose to ask the minister what is going to be the effect of the Bill before I vote for it.

Mr. INGRAM. This Bill stood on the order paper for some time at the instance of the Prime Minister. On the 3rd of March the First Minister asked that the committee rise and report progress. This is only the 7th of April, and next Monday