

Mr. HAGGART. The statement has been made virtually only to-day. We have only heard what the intention of the government is. There is a great deal of difference between the opposition and the government with reference to the interpretation of the Bill. I am sorry to say that my opinion differs entirely from the statement of the Finance Minister that it is only an option, that it is only a right to be exercised the same as on any other railway.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. If there is any difference of opinion it is not intended, and if the Bill is to be amended in the direction the hon. gentleman suggests it can be so amended when the time comes.

Mr. BAKER. I think that the request made by my hon. friend from Lanark is a most reasonable one in the interests of the country. It is all very well to say that we should press on the Bills in this House regardless of what takes place in another House. But the Bills now before us are not ordinary Bills, not private Bills, but are Bills peculiarly and specially connected with the vital interests of this Dominion. They are connected with the great question of transportation, of which we have heard from the right hon. gentleman so frequently in the last two or three years. Now hon. gentlemen opposite may think that we are opposing these Bills for the sake of opposition. So far as I am concerned at all events, I say that I am not opposing these Bills for the sake of opposition. We were to have to-night from the Minister of Railways and Canals an explanation in detail of the government's policy, an explanation which would enable us to consider intelligently the Bill that we have just read a third time and the Bill that is now before us. I would appeal to any gentleman on the other side of this House who has heard the Minister of Railways to-night, whether the information he has given us has added one iota to the knowledge of any gentleman with regard to the subject matter. I have listened, and I always listen, with the object of respect to the Minister of Railways, I have tried to listen to him with the object of understanding him. I appeal to every member of this House whether the information he has given us has enabled us to understand what this country ought to do with regard to these two Bills. Now, Mr. Speaker, the question may be asked, What has the government Bill to do with this domestic Bill? And it is a very fair question perhaps to ask. But here is the government of this Dominion, a railway proprietor and owner of some 1,500 miles of railway, intimately concerned in and connected with the two railways that are now seeking to coalesce. We are asked to enable these two companies to join hands and be one company when the very fact of that coalition may be of great disadvantage to the govern-

ment railways and the provinces down by the sea. Surely, Sir, I need not appeal to any minister or any representative of the maritime provinces, to hon. gentlemen opposite who represent the maritime provinces, and who know that the question we are dealing with is of the utmost importance as regards the interests of those provinces and of the Intercolonial. Can anybody dispute it? Why, Sir, supposing the Intercolonial was not owned by the government but by the Intercolonial Railway Company, and the company found two railways terminating at Montreal, the Canada Atlantic and the Grand Trunk, and that one of these companies continued eastward from Montreal in rivalry with the Intercolonial Railway, does anybody suppose that the officers of the Intercolonial Railway would lie by, sit easy and go to sleep while this connecting line, the Canada Atlantic, and this connecting and rival line, the Grand Trunk, were quietly joining hands. That is what we are asked to allow here to-day. We have three Bills before the House, Mr. Speaker, one is a Bill of what for the moment I choose to call the Intercolonial Railway Company, asking certain running powers over the Canada Atlantic. This Intercolonial Railway Company knows that the Canada Atlantic and the Grand Trunk are negotiating an agreement by which the two shall be combined in a common interest. And, according to the government's ideas, the Intercolonial Railway should rest content and actually assist the other two companies to settle matters to their own satisfaction.

And we as sensible men in this House, men supposed to be possessed of brains, are asked to sit down and say that we have nothing to do with this as representing the Intercolonial Railway. Why in the name of common sense, as the right hon. gentleman appealed to us in another debate the other day, should the owners of the Intercolonial Railway, having the right to refuse legislation, sit quietly and take third place. Is it not reasonable that the hon. member for Lanark then should say to the First Minister: 'Postpone Bill (No. 2) at all events; you have gone through with No. 1 but postpone No. 2 until we know what the government is going to do. I have tried to find out by carefully listening this afternoon what the government is going to do and I must confess that I do not know. Their Bill has been presented here, not a printed Bill distributed to the members of this House, but a Bill in typewritten form. As a matter of grace and favour a copy of it is sent over to the leader of the opposition during the debate. Most of us have come to the conclusion that the Bill was prepared by the Minister of Railways with haste, in printed form, and probably he has had no more time to consider it than we have had, yet in this question involving the interests