

spoke on the Bill referred to, when it was under discussion here, whether I held the same views to-day that I did then. Sir, I have referred to the report of the speech made by myself on that occasion. I have read it over carefully, and there is not a single statement in that speech, made in 1873, that I am not prepared to-day to endorse, and at the same time to sustain the Bill before the House. Sir, what was the position assumed by the hon. gentleman on that occasion, in introducing his Bill? It was for the wholesale distribution of the lands in the North-West into vast monopolies, nominally for the purpose of building railways, but which, practically, would not have built one. Sir, he endeavored to create the idea that the \$10,000 worth of land per mile which he proposed to give would build a railway at that time. Why, Sir, it would not have begun to build railways; it has not begun to build railways to-day, as we have found from experience. The hon. gentleman challenges the statements I made on that occasion, and I answered him in this way:

“He did not know what the opinions of gentlemen from Ontario and Quebec might be, nor did he care. He had one thing to do, and that was his duty. His duty in this case he conceived to be to call the attention of Parliament to the proposed spoliation of western land. It would be unjust to the other Provinces to pass an Act like this, which would enable railway speculators and companies to absorb three-fourths of the whole western territory—that territory on which they hoped to construct the great Canadian Pacific road. He yielded to no one in the desire to benefit the North-West, but he certainly could not approve of an Act such as that now before the House. He could not believe in a scheme which would enable speculators to absorb millions of acres of land, with which it was hoped the country might be recouped for the money it was now spending in opening up that great territory. They had a right to expect something better from the Government than that. If the Administration really desired to open up the country, by all means let them do so; but why should they, by legislation of this kind, embarrass the resources of the country in a way which could never be retrieved.”

Then, Sir, I went on to say:

“Let him state the practical objections to the Bill. He believed that under this Bill any number of speculators might, by complying with certain requirements, construct from one to twenty railways, thus absorbing hundreds of thousands of acres of land. When the Grand Trunk Railway Company came, the other day, asking the privilege to connect with several other railways, and when the Canada Southern Railway came asking privileges—what did his hon. friend from Chateauguay say? No man guarded the liberties, rights and privileges more than he, where enormous powers were asked; and when these two railways came before the House, none were more careful of their privileges, or more zealous than his hon. friend. He (Mr. Mitchell) was very much pleased to see the great amount of caution the hon. member exhibited in endeavoring to prevent the railway companies getting the powers for general purposes which they sought.”

The late member for Chateauguay, Mr. Holton, said, on that occasion:

“Let us give them what is absolutely necessary for the purpose. Whenever they want anything further in the way of legislation let them come and ask it, and if it is right we will give it them.”

Now, Sir, the point I make in the matter is this: that while he proposed to give this enormous wholesale grant, extending over the whole territory, giving them at one fell swoop possession of the whole north-western country, which we had bought and paid for with the people's money, I was not opposed, and I never have been opposed, and I am not opposed now, to giving proper and substantial aid to any necessary railway that it is desired to construct in that north-western country. The point taken by the late lamented member for Chateauguay (Mr. Holton) on the occasion to which I refer was this: that if railway companies come to this Parliament seeking aid, we should consider every application upon its merits, but not give it general powers to absorb other railways, which system has been the curse of this country—and we have an illustration of that in the monster corporation, the Grand Trunk Railway Company. The policy which this House ought to have pursued, the policy which this Government should pursue, is, that whenever applications are made for aid from the public funds to build a railway, this Parliament should consider each individual case on its merits, and deal with it; do as you are doing with the company under consideration

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in this House; take up each of these Bills and discuss them upon the merits; and if the railway is entitled to aid, if the location is satisfactory, and if the railway is to give facilities to the population and a large measure of accommodation to the public, then let us give that company such aid as is necessary. But do not let us do what the hon. member for Bothwell asked us to do by his Bill, and pass a measure to lay the whole country under contribution to a band of railway speculators. Sir, I will read a little more of the speech to which my hon. friend has chosen to refer, and which he challenged at the time:

“He should have said to them: ‘You are going to make thousands of miles of railway under that Bill, if there is land enough; you are going to let the whole of that territory be absorbed by private speculators.’ As his hon. friend from Marquette had said, two lines of railway were certainly needed.”

That gentleman was not the present member for Marquette, but the present Judge Ryan. Is there anything to indicate that my opinions have changed? Is there any portion of the speech which negatives the idea that I have been in favor of rendering aid, all necessary aid, to railways in the North-West. The hon. gentleman nods his head, implying yes. I challenge him to point out in what respect I held opinions then that I do not entertain now, and I will prove to him that my opinions now are consistent with my speech in 1878, and I may say that I will support this measure. The hon. gentleman again shakes his head. I will read some extracts from my speech in that year, and I will ask him to point out any portions of it that are inconsistent with my position to-day:

“Well, if application were made to that House for the necessary thousands of acres for the construction of these roads, he would be ready to give all possible aid; but a Bill like this, which gave power to private speculators to absorb the whole territory, was one of the most outrageous measures he had ever heard come before Parliament. He was astonished that the hon. Minister of the Interior should have dared to propound a scheme of this character, so extreme in its powers. A greater injustice to the other parts of the Dominion than the measure proposed no man could conceive. He was not going to take up the time of the House very long in discussing this matter, but he wished to call the attention of hon. members representing the Eastern Provinces of Canada to the increased taxation which would be placed upon their districts by the proposed measure. While he approved of money being expended for the opening up and improvement of Manitoba, he was not prepared to give up that magnificent country to private individuals, for party purposes and for party plunder. He would tell hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House that while he was prepared to entertain any fair and just claim which might be made, he would not submit to any such scheme of spoliation in the North-West as that which was intended. Throughout the whole Dominion, every scheme should be dealt with on its own merits, and if it was found that the one or two railways referred to by the hon. member for Marquette were really required, he would be willing that the House should grant a charter for the undertakings, besides giving subsidies in money or land to secure them. He would ask hon. gentlemen opposite to consider the proposition he had just made, and then say whether they would take upon themselves the responsibility of this measure when they went back to their constituents next summer. The Minister of the Interior had said, had hon. members on the Opposition side looked unfavorably upon any railway connection with the American Republic; but hon. gentlemen opposite had always been anxious, not only to have railway connections with the United States, but to maintain business, social and national relations with those on the other side of the line. His hon. friend had done the members of the Opposition an injustice when he made that statement. If the hon. gentleman would withdraw his Bill, and introduce a special measure, giving powers to the two roads spoken of by the hon. member for Marquette, he would have his (Mr. Mitchell's) support. He would also agree to grant lands outside those lines, but he should certainly endeavor to record his vote against the Bill introduced by the Minister of the Interior. He (Mr. Mitchell) did not want to say one disrespectful word regarding the people of the North-West. He knew some of the difficulties and hardships they had endured in the settlement of that country; but they must not forget that only a few years had elapsed since they owned any part of that territory at all, it having previously been under the administration of the Hudson Bay Company. They must not forget that the immense territory outside Manitoba was the heritage of the people of the Dominion of Canada at large. If, on the other hand, they looked upon it as the property of Manitoba alone, then do not let them ask Parliament to impose laws on the other Provinces in order that money might be squandered in the construction of the so-called North-West route; if they claimed the whole territory to make their railroads, let them raise the money themselves and make the necessary improvements, and not ask the other portions of the Dominion, first to buy the country, then to spend millions in improvements, and