

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—I am very glad my hon. friend has spoken of that point; I came near overlooking it. As already pointed out, the Minister of Railways made a personal investigation of the entire system in the late autumn. As I have said, we are operating 270 miles of the road, namely, from Hearst to Amos. Now, as to the operation of the entire system, it will be necessary almost immediately for the Government of Canada to operate in a limited way the entire system for the purpose of maintenance. Hon. gentlemen will readily understand that owing to climatic conditions which must necessarily play a very large part in the road, for instance, such as spring freshets and all that kind of thing, it will be necessary for the Government almost at once to enter upon the entire system with a view of keeping it open; and if any inconveniences have been suffered by those living along the line up to the present time, there is a possibility of those difficulties being overcome when the Government through force of circumstances will be called upon at a very early day to place under operation the entire system for the purpose of maintenance and for the purpose of preventing the decay into which the road must necessarily fall except it becomes a going-concern."

Hon. Mr. DAVID—I have another question, you answered so well. When did the Government arrive at that decision?

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—The Government always foresaw that that would have to be done, and the necessary steps are now being taken by the Department of Railways looking to the operation of the system so as to place it in a position of activity, before the spring freshets.

Hon. Mr. WATSON—By the Grand Trunk Pacific, or by the Government?

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—Oh, no, by the Government. I would furthermore say that immediately the contractors completed their contracts between the points which I have mentioned, namely, Quebec and Cochrane, the Government took the necessary steps to notify the Grand Trunk Pacific of the completion of the road and of the necessity of their carrying out or fulfilling the obligations which fall upon them under the contract between the Crown and the company.

I need not say to hon. gentlemen that the company has not responded with that alacrity which the Government would very

Hon. Mr. DAVID.

much like to see. They have not pointed out wherein the road is incomplete in any particular respect but they rely upon a general objection, which as my hon. friend opposite knows is a very favourite objection, in special pleading. What the result of this may be I cannot say. The probabilities are that negotiations between the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Government may be extended over some period of time, but in the meantime the perplexities which must necessarily attend the handling of so important a matter will be thrown upon the shoulders of the Government. I hope the explanation which I have given will satisfy my hon. friend from Mille Îles, and that the Government of the day will be acquitted of any desire to embarrass in the least those who may have settled along the line of that road. I think hon. gentlemen will agree with me, no matter to what extent they may disagree with the political colour of the Government of the day, that it is highly desirable the Government should exercise the greatest economy in the further handling of this undertaking which has already cost the Government of Canada a sum enormously in excess of that which was anticipated by the late Government.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN—The hon. gentleman says there are only 270 miles out of the 1,804 between Moncton and Winnipeg in operation. I thought the section from Winnipeg to Superior Junction, 458 miles was in operation. Further, I thought that from Lévis to Moncton there was a bi-weekly service started a long time ago.

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—I am not discussing that. I am simply discussing that section of the railroad which has to do with the discussion which arose to-day, namely between Quebec and Cochrane. I understood that my hon. friend from Mille Îles (Hon. Mr. David) was not interested in the other sections of the road. Of course, a temporary arrangement has been entered into for the operation of the section between Winnipeg and Superior Junction.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN—The Government seem to be paying a pretty good rent considering the fact that they are hard up—\$12,000 per month. Have you figured out how much that is per train mile?

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—No, but that is the best we can do.