

transcontinental railway. Who promoted the project of the trans-Canadian line? Was it a popular scheme in Quebec? Had it no backing, no popular support there? Why, Quebec was unanxious in favour of the transcontinental line, and the hon. gentleman's statement is absurdly unfounded. And, I may remark parenthetically, we are adopting a scheme that disposed of the trans-Canadian project with its demand of enormous subsidies in cash and land in favour of which there would have been pressure which it would have been difficult to resist.

Mr. CLANCY. How?

Mr. CHARLTON. How is such pressure brought to bear? Is my hon. friend (Mr. Clancy) a novice in political matters? Has he been living in the cool shades of opposition so long that he has forgotten everything except what is true and righteous and in complete accordance with the principles of the moral law? Mr. Speaker, when the speech from the Throne was delivered, my hon. friend (Hon. Mr. Blair) was a member of that ministry. That speech foreshadowed a transcontinental road. We had not reached, at that period, a definite conclusion as to how this thing was to be proceeded with, but there was a broad statement to the effect that a transcontinental line was deemed to be a necessity, and the government was about to proceed to consider the best method to adopt for the construction of that line. Why did not my hon. friend resign then?

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. We got 600 miles of it authorized this very session. That is the thing that was in my mind.

Hon. Mr. CHARLTON. Now, the burden of my hon. friend's speech was the question of government ownership. And I give the hon. gentleman credit of having honestly, energetically and without deviation advocated that principle of the construction of the road by the government. And I have this to say with regard to that matter, that I sympathized with that view myself. But I did not consider that my own views were entitled to be accepted by the government, as the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals evidently did in his own case. I presented my arguments in favour of that scheme and those arguments were received with courtesy and given careful consideration. Then I heard the arguments against the adoption of the scheme, and I felt a little doubt whether I might not have been mistaken. And had my ideas been adopted, and had I been responsible for the adoption of that scheme, I should have trembled for the consequence, and, no doubt, should have regretted it was done. Government-ownership has a seductive appearance. It appeals to the imagination. It would be a bold policy. It would be just the thing for this country, granted two or three conditions. The first condition is separation, total

separation from political management of the road. The second condition is honesty of construction. The third condition is honesty and efficiency in the management on the basis of a well organized and well arranged railway. If we could have all these conditions, government-ownership would be a good thing in my opinion. But the danger is that we might not be able to secure these conditions. The members of the ministry possibly in arriving at a conclusion on this matter may have had the Intercolonial road in view and may have had some doubt, owing to the results of the management of the Intercolonial, whether it was best to extend the principle further. And I presume their doubts were well founded. Now, the hon. gentleman tells us that in his opinion we should have proceeded in a leisurely, careful, conservative manner. First of all, we should have secured an appropriation for surveys. Then we should have gone on and made the surveys, then, in due time, at the expiration of a couple of years, we might have proceeded with the construction; and, at the end of the next decade, probably, we would have had the road completed. And in the meantime, the congestion in the west would unquestionably have made us sorry that we had not got it sooner.

Now, with regard to exploration, we should not fall into the error of supposing that we are entirely without information as to the country through which this road will pass. We have a great amount of information. We have not actually located the line; we have not actually taken the level? But we know what the general character of the country is between Quebec and Winnipeg north of Lake Nipigon. We have one survey made by Sir Sanford Fleming from the head of the Montreal river north of Lake Nipigon to Winnipeg. He tells us that it is a highly favourable line, with no grades more than one per cent and no bridges more than 300 feet in length and only a few of them; that the country is a level one and highly favourable for railway construction. With regard to the country east of the commencement of that survey to Quebec, we have abundant information which shows that it is of the same character as that reported on by Sir Sanford Fleming. This great country north of the height of land offers few impediments to railway construction. We know enough of the general character of that country to warrant us in definitely entering upon the scheme of constructing that railway. Then, with regard to the country from Winnipeg to Fort Simpson, through the Peace River Pass, that country has been traversed again and again not only by explorers but by engineers. The character of that country is thoroughly well known. For the whole territory from Winnipeg to Fort Simpson by way of Winnipeg, the government is in possession of all the information that is necessary to warrant it in embarking upon a scheme for the