

the Canadian Pacific—and we as Canadians are all proud of the way in which they have administered it—could not take over all the railroads of Canada in the public interest and administer them for the public good?

Mr. D. D. McKENZIE (Cape Breton North): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Government (Sir Thomas White) for a while played fair with this Bill and followed it up in its real purpose. At a certain stage, however, of the proceedings in connection with it he commenced to play politics and to draw a distinction between the two sides of the House by saying that we were opposed to Government ownership of railways and that he was in favour of it, hoping thereby to get some applause from his followers and some kudos in some parts of the country where, for the present, Government ownership happens to be popular. Every hon. member who expects to enjoy public confidence should endeavour to serve the public honestly and squarely with his opinions and not trim his sails to every wind that blows over the country. No man can expect to enjoy the full confidence of the people—and whether he enjoys their confidence or not, to do what is best for the people—unless he has sound principles of his own, and is not capable of being carried away for the moment by a current of public opinion. I venture to tell the Acting Prime Minister that his history is not that of a man who favours public ownership. His history, within a few years, aye, within a few weeks, was that he was a strong supporter and advocate of private ownership. But in playing politics a few days ago he found it advisable to trim his sails to suit the breeze and he became favourable to public ownership.

That question is not before the House at all; it is not under discussion, and it was not discussed at any stage, whether public ownership was popular or not, or whether it was a proper policy or not. We have public ownership of railways, and the purport of this Bill is how best to handle the property which we have as public owners. I challenge the Acting Prime Minister to say that if the Canadian Northern Company was making a success of its business as the Canadian Pacific is he would step in and take it from them and handle it as a publicly owned enterprise. He would do nothing of the kind, and he is simply making a virtue of a necessity. We were forced into taking over the Canadian Northern and because of that we have to make the best of it. The Acting Prime Minister would, I am

sure, be the last man, whether intentionally or not, to misquote any hon. member, and I wish to be generous to him and say that, inadvertently, he misquoted me to-day. He quoted me as saying, in connection with this Bill, that I was opposed to public ownership, whereas, he was reading from a statement I made over a year ago, on the first occasion that the Minister of Railways brought in his Estimates, and his report on the Government ownership of a railway which we then had, which we had been running for nearly a year, and for which he was looking for more money. In connection with the business that was before the House then, over a year ago, I made the statement which the Acting Prime Minister quoted as if I had made it the other day.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: Did the hon. member or did he not quote the statement in his speech the other day?

Mr. McKENZIE: I did. I wanted to put myself absolutely right before the House and the country when the Acting Prime Minister said that I declared myself against public ownership the year before, and I quoted what I said a year ago, which is this:

It is important for the people that we should have some conception of what we are doing. If this were a meeting of directors—

And I was talking of the Minister of Railways coming before the House with his Estimates.

—it would not be a very cheerful one. The directors and shareholders would have discovered that we were spending away up in the millions in the development and working of the road, but that we have made no money. We are in debt. If we were ordinary directors and shareholders of a road we would have to put our hands down in our pockets to find money in order to make betterments and to run the road, and that would not be a cheerful prospect. However, we are new beginners in this enterprise. I was never in favour of Government ownership—

I said that over a year ago. I am honest about it. Life is too dear, peace too sweet, approval of my own conscience is too dear to me to bother with anything but what I believe.

I am in favour of it now—

That is what I said a year ago.

—as I think private enterprise will be better in these matters. Particularly in colonization and development will private enterprise and private energy do much better than Government ownership, but by the force of circumstances, we are in this net, and we must stay