

\$250,000,000; and the argument against abandonment is that along its lines settlers have established themselves, towns have been built up and vested interests have been created, and that abandonment would do great injustice to those settlers and vested interests. Well, let us say that the best policy is that the Transcontinental shall not be abandoned, and that it shall be operated. Its construction was due to the inexplicable folly of the Canadian people. I am not blaming one party more than another, though I might say that these colossal blunders involving the Transcontinental and the Grand Trunk Pacific were the result of the administration of the so-called Liberal party.

Now, let us take the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which has fallen into the hands of this country. The members of this House and the people of the country ought to have it clearly in their minds that the Administration has not embarked upon this national railway policy from preference. National ownership of railways is all right, but the national ownership that we are getting through being obliged to acquire these white elephants is not the kind of public ownership that any sane man would care to embark upon. But there was the Transcontinental; it was thrown on our lap, and if we do not operate it it goes into decay. The same with the Grand Trunk Pacific. Some of it is of value, but the portion from Edmonton to the Pacific coast is another line which will probably not earn its axle grease for some years. As the ex-Minister of Finance (Sir Thomas White) said this afternoon, the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Transcontinental was made an issue in the election of 1904. I remember how it was said that the people of the West were clamouring for this accommodation. They were not clamouring at all. It was the exploiters that were clamouring to get contracts and to institute a cry that would carry the country. Well, the proposal did carry the country, and we have the Grand Trunk Pacific constructed at a cost of two or three hundred millions of dollars. I think the total cost is something like \$97,000 a mile. I recall that the Brandon section of the Manitoba system was built at a cost of \$9,000 a mile. Of course, I do not institute a comparison, because one line goes through prairie country and the other is over the mountains. But we have the Transcontinental from Moncton to Winnipeg, the Grand Trunk Pacific from Winnipeg to the Pacific coast, the Cana-

[Mr. Richardson.]

dian Northern—of which I shall only refer to the British Columbia section as unproductive and uneconomic—and we have that section of the Canadian Northern from Sudbury down to Toronto. These four vast stretches of railway which have been dumped upon our laps are included in the National railway system of Canada. Now, Mr. Speaker, while you may denounce the Laurier-Sifton regime that drove these enormities through Parliament, still, it must be remembered that the people voted upon the issue and that the people are responsible and must take the consequences. It must be perfectly evident to everybody that the Transcontinental and the other lines which I have named are uneconomic portions, white elephant portions, of the nationally-owned system of railways. Some time ago I had it in mind to suggest to this Parliament that those uneconomic portions of the railways ought to be grouped together and labelled "public ward system." They belong to the public, but they are just wards. We are losing immense amounts of money in their operation; they really should not be operated; but to charge rates on those uneconomic systems sufficient to pay operating expenses and to give a return to the public, is a most absurd proposition. The people must take their medicine with regard to those uneconomic portions of the nationally-owned system. I think no one will dissent from that view.

At six o'clock, the House took recess.

After Recess.

The House resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. R. L. RICHARDSON (resuming): When the House rose for dinner I was discussing the undesirability of the Government and this Parliament allowing an increase in railway freight and passenger rates as has been proposed, and indeed advocated, both by the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway and by Mr. D. B. Hanna, president of our nationally-owned system. The House was rather slim when it rose at six o'clock, and is still fairly slim. Perhaps that is in a measure due to the heavy artillery that the members heard with such interest this afternoon. I should not like to attribute it to the speech of my hon. friend from Westmorland (Mr. Copp), and I certainly do not intend to attribute it to myself as the House was rather thin when I started. I think that for the benefit of members who were not present this afternoon I had better recapitulate briefly.