

and is not, therefore, in running operation, greatly to the injury of the section of the country through which the road passes, and it is represented by the president, directors and other persons who have been heard by the Sub-Committee of the Privy Council in support of the application of the Atlantic and Lake Superior Company, that the operating of the said railway during the winter would be of immense benefit to the locality through which it runs, and would be a valuable feeder to the Intercolonial Railway, and they add that arrangements are practicable and could be made, if approved by Your Excellency in Council, between the courts having the sequestration proceedings before them and the Department of Railways and Canals.

The Minister adds that, in proposing that the Government should take over and operate the Baie des Chaleurs Railway for the coming winter, it was strongly represented to the Sub-Committee of the Privy Council that the road was in good, safe working condition, and was provided with sufficient rolling stock in good serviceable condition, and could be operated for the winter season by the Department of Railways and Canals as a branch or feeder to the Intercolonial Railway, not only without loss to the Government, but so as to produce a balance over working expenses.

That was the assertion of this celebrated individual by the name of Armstrong against whom my hon. friend the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Tarte) delivered such a fiery philippic and declared that he would not touch him with a ten foot pole. It was the assertion of this gentleman that this would be a valuable feeder and that if they would just take it over and operate it for six months in the winter it would not be a loss but it would actually bring in a valuable revenue. The Minister of Railways and Canals had no other information of any sort to back up the proposition. With the statistics of that road before him, with the expenses and receipts as sworn to by the company after it had been run for two years, he simply accepts the assertion of the promoters, leaps into an illegal and unauthorized operation of a railway and then comes to Parliament and meekly says: "We went into it as an experiment; we have lost \$12,000; we ask this Parliament for money to recoup us our expenses." I simply thought it would be well to read this Order in Council to show upon what information a business Government undertakes an unbusinesslike arrangement.

Mr. SPROULE. It seems to me the most unbusinesslike proposition ever submitted by any Government in the history of this country. What are the arguments advanced in its favour? It has been strongly represented by the parties interested, they say. We have our own engineers whom we could send out at a day's notice to look over the railway. We could have ascertained how much traffic was handled. We could have got all this information but we did not take the trouble to get it. It has been strongly represented to us by the parties who are likely to profit by the transaction. To think that the Minister of

Railways and Canals with all the officers at his disposal—engineers, accountants and others, who are in the pay of the Government, did not take the trouble to look into this and ascertain whether or not it was possible to operate the road without loss, seems almost incredible. If this is regarded as a business transaction that ought to satisfy the Council it should not be looked upon as a business transaction that will satisfy this House.

Welland Canal—

To pay William Higgins, from time he became unable to work, 20th October, 1896, until the date of superannuation, 1st February, 1897, at \$38.....	\$139 33
To pay G. Edwards, from time he became unable to work, 20th October, 1896, until date of superannuation, 15th December, 1896, at \$45.....	79 16

Mr. McCLEARY. While we were discussing this question a few days ago, in reference to the Welland Canal, I called the attention of the Minister of Railways and Canals to some of the dismissals there and he questioned the statement I made as to the number that had been dismissed. He said that about 45 men had been dismissed. I stated that in addition there were 50 or 60 others, and he questioned the accuracy of my statement. In addition to the 45 men dismissed along the line of the Welland Canal formerly referred to, in the counties of Lincoln and Welland there were 69 others, which would make 114 dismissals. And in addition on the feeder branch the men dismissed, would number 15 or 20 more, so that out of 160 or 170 men employed on the Welland Canal upwards of 125 or 130 have been dismissed. I just call the attention of the Minister to this because he has given his friends carte-blanche there and they have been carrying out his instructions to perfection.

Mr. FOSTER. Has the Minister nothing to say at all, when, after having made a statement to this House that no more than forty-five had been dismissed, in refutation of a statement made by a member of this House that many more had been dismissed, and now when the hon. member comes directly from the scene of action and reiterates this statement that more than he asserted have been dismissed, and the Minister simply says: I think your information is not quite correct. The Minister is in either one position or the other. Either he is not administering his own department, but it is being done by a committee, so far as dismissals and appointments in their places are concerned; or else, he is not giving to this House the information which the House ought to have, that is, authentic information when a Minister speaks as to the facts under consideration. I could easily see that the Minister might not be within a few of the number, but there is a wide divergence