

## STATE OPERATION OF RAILWAYS

There are those who are alarmed at the prospect of Government operation of railways. I am not insensible to the fact that there are certain difficulties, possibly certain disadvantages attending state ownership of railways. But, Sir, we have to choose at the present time when this burdensome contract is placed before us, and let us remember that even if we build this line there is nothing to prevent us leasing it for a limited period, until public opinion on this point is more fully developed in Canada. And if we should lease that line, built and owned by the people of this country we should undoubtedly be able to lease it on much better terms than have been secured for the people of this country with respect to the eastern division. If from the eastern division we have secured a rental of three per cent., for part of the term of the lease, surely for that splendid profitable western division we could secure a very much higher rental. But, Sir, I believe that by the time we would have this road constructed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the growing sentiment of the people of Canada would have reached the conclusion that that road, constructed by the people of this country should not only be owned, but operated by them. That is the point to which I believe public sentiment will have arrived in this country, even if this road shall be built by the Government with all possible expedition.

The Government is driving this measure through parliament, not by the aid of a reason or argument, but by the mere force of its submissive majority. Not one man in ten of the Government supporters has taken sufficient interest in the measure to make himself thoroughly acquainted with it in all its details. The Grand Trunk has decided what the Government must do, and the Government has decided what its supporters in parliament must do. The Grand Trunk thus dictates to the Government and through the Government to the country, which is allowed no voice.

Before committing the country to an enterprise which will increase our national obligations by more than fifty per cent., which will so pledge our future resources as to prevent any great scheme of national transportation for many years, which will probably destroy the Intercolonial Railway, and indefinitely retard any advancement in state ownership; before doing this, constitutional usage demands that the Government should submit the question to the people. We have moved an amendment to that effect, which has been voted down. The Government has no mandate from the people to engage in this enterprise, nor has it any legitimate authority to deny an appeal to the people. It has no justification to refuse to listen to the voice of the people. It proposes at all costs to force this measure through parliament and upon the people. It proposes forthwith to enter into binding contracts, and to thus stifle the