

of such grave character as it is said to be, and if it is liable to be attended with such disastrous results to the interests of Canada, then I for one, and I am quite sure the general body of this House will be prepared even to support a proposition of this character, if it is going to relieve us from such direful consequences, rather than have that calamitous crisis come upon us.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. We are further told from the same quarter that we have got to decide 'now,' whether we will go into the undertaking. Mark you; we have now to decide, or it will slip away from us to our inestimable and irreparable loss. Well Sir, I have heard expressions of that kind used in some of the auction shops, but I cannot imagine how any one can think that such kind of arguing will impress the mass of the intelligent people of this country. One would think that the credit of Canada at the present moment was such that we could incur a liability of this kind, but if we did not incur it at this very moment, or if we allowed a year or two to pass by so that we might obtain information to enable us to proceed understandingly with this project, we would then be in a position to carry it out. Well, that kind of reasoning is futile. To my mind, Sir, Canada will be all the stronger in the estimation of the financial men of the world, if before entering into a proposal of this character, Canada shows that she is moving in it with judgment and discretion.

Now, Sir, I come to a question which has something of a new character; something rather which is an appendage to the original proposition, and which concerns more directly the department of government in which I had been serving. I refer to the extension of this railway from Quebec to Moncton. Let me say, that while I do not profess to know anything with regard to these other things and can only conjecture as to what would be the result of them, I do profess to know something about the extension of the railway from Quebec to Moncton, and I do profess to know something about its effect upon the public interest in relation to the Intercolonial Railway. My objection to this railway being constructed to Moncton has been stated in general terms in my letter to the premier, in which I stated that it was paralleling the Intercolonial Railway. I trust that no person who read that statement in my letter imagined that I meant the word 'paralleling,' as used in the sense that having got away from the Intercolonial Railway for a short distance it maintained an equal distance from the Intercolonial Railway all the way through. What I meant was, that in its broadest sense it duplicated the Intercolonial. I meant that it was proposing to take away the traffic, the through traffic, the largest portion of the traffic which the Intercolonial would have,

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and which would be calculated to carry. I meant that it was going to be a competitor and a rival for much the same business as the Intercolonial Railway does. I meant that the government was setting up another railway, building out of its own means a railway whereby the present great Intercolonial Railway would be dismantled, and would be depleted of its business, and would be practically destroyed, and that all the prospects of the Intercolonial Railway, and all its hopes, and all the interests which naturally centre around it, would be materially prejudiced and impaired. That is what I meant, and that is what I think I can establish to the conclusive satisfaction of any person who may care to hear me. I am not going to say that the Intercolonial Railway ought not have competition in any form, because it has always had competition and new competing lines have been chartered by parliament and subsidized by parliament from time to time, much to its injury. All that has been done I presume in the interest of the people, and therefore nothing can be said, I assume and believe that in every case in which any little line or branch line diverting traffic from the Intercolonial Railway was authorized, there was reason behind it, or otherwise it would not have been done. But, Sir, I maintain that in respect to this duplication of the Intercolonial Railway by the extension from Quebec to Moncton, there is no necessity, there is no reason, there is no justification, there is no object good, bad or indifferent to be attained.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. Yes; it is absolutely useless. It is a total and absolute waste of the public money. It is not only a destruction of the Intercolonial Railway, but it is a sheer unjustifiable squandering of the public money.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. I cannot speak less strongly because I feel strongly with regard to this. I feel strongly because I can realize as no gentleman in this House can realize the efforts which have been made, and the successful efforts which have been made during the past few years to improve the character of that railway, to give it a better standing and a better foothold, and to promote its earning capacity as it never had been promoted before.

An hon. MEMBER. What do the Conservatives say to that?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. GOURLEY. You fellows are trying to kill it.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. We have expended upon that railway \$70,000,000 of money, and now the government proposes to spend \$15,000,000 more in order to make our ex-