

I shall regret if the motion which I am about to make will be regarded by my hon. friends on the treasury benches as one of non-confidence. I do not think it should be so regarded, for neither in the motion itself nor in anything that I may say in connection with it will there be any justification for such an attitude. I think the question is one on which we may reasonably ask to have a free and open vote. If the motion which I shall make and the reasons accompanying it commend themselves to the judgment of hon. members of the House, I think they should feel free to vote on the merits of the question, and that the Government should be willing to accept the conclusion that they may reach.

It was suggested at an early stage of the discussion of this subject that some exceptional method was necessary in dealing with the finances of this railway company in order to avoid the evils, real or imaginary, in connection with political patronage. Now I do not think any argument can be founded on that. While, under this Bill, we shall transfer a large portion of the public business of the country to one group of gentlemen, separate and apart from the usual principles of parliamentary government, we are not going to turn everything over to them. A very considerable portion of the public business of this country will still be subject to the rules and principles to which I have referred. Each of the ministers of the Crown will still have to do some public business, and some of them much public business, and if the principle of patronage will not enter into the public business in their hands under the old order of things, why must it necessarily enter into the management of the railways if the old rules remain? Therefore, if it be contended for one moment that this departure from what I believe to be the sound principle must be taken in order to avoid the evil of political patronage, my answer is that we shall still have a large volume of public business to be conducted under the old principles; and if that business can be conducted in the old way without bringing in any question of party patronage, why cannot the business of this railway company be conducted in the same manner? So I feel that no well-founded argument can be made along that line.

When this Bill first came before the Committee it was in the form of a resolution in which, as hon. gentlemen will remember, all the clauses of the Bill had been thrown

together into one single sentence, so that there was difficulty in understanding it. In consequence of that the minister in charge of the Bill expressed a desire that the discussion should not be protracted at that stage but that the matter might be more properly considered when the Bill had been brought before the Committee of the House. The point I am now making was first raised by the hon. member for Maisonneuve (Mr. Lemieux) who called attention to the exceptional circumstances under which the finances of this Railway Board were to be handled. The hon. Minister of Railways and Canals then said:

But this is a matter for the consideration of the Committee, and if there is any objection to the plan proposed, or if the Committee thinks the other way is better, we can change it.

So, at that time, it did not seem that the Government were finally committed to the principle to which I am now taking exception. The minister rather intimated that it was a fair matter for consideration and could be dealt with later on. When the Bill did come before the Committee of the Whole House, the question was again raised and strong reasons, I think, were urged why this Bill should be brought into conformity with the general practice. However, the Government have not seen their way to do so and we are obliged now to consider the Bill in its present form.

On the principle of public ownership, I do not think it is necessary to say much. I think we have now advanced too far to make that an open question for debate. We have, whether we like it or not, a considerable measure of public ownership. It is unavoidable and I have no desire to quarrel with it at all. I accept it as it is. We have to accept it whether we like it or not. I am not as enthusiastic as some hon. gentlemen are in praise of the principle as applied to our railways. On the contrary, I frankly admit that this is a great experiment and I have grave doubts as to its ultimate success. But nevertheless I have no desire to oppose or to obstruct it. On the contrary, if we are to have the principle of public ownership, I should like to see the thing get a fair chance. But, it is not going to get a fair chance under this Bill.

The principle of public ownership, in so far as it is represented in this Bill, commenced with two handicaps. The first was the handicap of the closure. I cannot help thinking that it was unwise on the part of the Government to attempt to force this measure through the House by this excep-