

and towns, the cost of living being so high, the people are clamouring for a reduction of taxes; but it seems according to the present programme, that we may as well say good-bye to any hope in that direction. Certainly with an increased capital expenditure of \$28,000,000 on branch lines we cannot look forward to any reduction in transportation costs for years to come; and I venture to predict that next year, we shall probably be asked to vote \$50,000,000 or \$60,000,000 in connection with branch lines.

Under these circumstances we need not look forward to seeing a balanced budget. In France they have been able to balance their accounts, and in England a year ago Stanley Baldwin's budget showed that the Mother Country had been keeping her capital commitments in check and providing for sinking fund and fixed charges out of earnings. The same thing is true of the United States. Does any hon. member know of any other country that spends money in this haphazard fashion, projecting branch lines here, branch lines there and branch lines everywhere without proper reports? Do you think the board of directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway would authorize the expenditure of \$28,000,000 on branch lines on the basis of such meagre information as we have been given in this chamber in connection with these proposals? Not at all. I am an advocate of public ownership, and I yield to no one either in this House or out of it in my support of the National Railways. But I certainly do believe that they should be economically administered, and I regret to say that in my judgment they are not. Now there are no branch lines proposed for the province of Ontario. That province has had to build its own branch lines. Some of the proposed lines before us certainly could not be classed in the category of works for the "general advantage of Canada" so as to come within the four corners of the Railway Act. I do not want hon. members from the province of Nova Scotia to think that I am opposing the construction of railways in that province particularly. That is not the case. I shall be making only a brief speech on the whole railway proposition, and it so happens that I am bound to refer to the province of Nova Scotia. No one is more eager to see the three Maritime provinces receive justice at the hands of the Dominion than I am, for it is my opinion that they have never got a fair show from confederation in connection with transportation. When I refer to this matter to-night

therefore I do not do so for the purpose of offering any criticism; I am merely criticising the general policy before us in regard to these branch lines.

I do not see why these twenty-eight branch lines should be treated any differently from the way in which our harbours are dealt with. Why should the National Railways be singled out for peculiar treatment? Last year the branch lines were all embraced in one bill which was thrown out by the Senate, and I venture to suggest that the Senate will do the same thing this year in connection with these bills on the meagre reports before us. I repeat, this is no way to submit a matter of this kind, of such vast importance, to the people's representatives. The Canadian Pacific Railway would not spend money on such meagre information, nor would the New York Central; and we have the opinion in that respect of the head of the latter corporation, the late Mr. A. H. Smith.

It seems to me that we are just going back to the position we were in ten or fifteen years ago in regard to railways. A royal commission was appointed to go over the whole railway system and find out what was wrong. They found that for our population, nine and a half million, we had as much railway mileage as they had in Germany with sixty-seven millions of people, or in France with forty-seven millions, or in the United Kingdom with a hundred and forty-six millions. The whole branch line programme is wrong and economically unsound at present, and cannot continue. The country will become bankrupt if we continue to pursue the course we have been pursuing. I believe there should be some branch lines. Some are necessary, but we should build only those lines that will fit in with the trunk line system and provide revenue—lines that will not be millstones around the neck of the National Railways for a long time or add to their fixed charges.

This commission which was appointed to remedy this state of affairs consisted of Mr. A. H. Smith, president of the New York Central, who was killed only last week, Mr. Acworth, one of the most brilliant operating railway managers in Great Britain, and the former head of the Railway Commission, Sir Henry Drayton, who is a member of this House. What did they recommend? Did they recommend that parliament should pass bills like this, for a branch line here, a line there and another line somewhere else? They recommended first, that before any money is voted by parliament for a charter or the extension of charters for branch lines,