

paralyzed. Here is what he says upon the subject, I beg leave to quote only a short extract of that work, dated April, 1917, and entitled, "A solution of the Canadian Railway problem."

I presume the hon. Minister of Finance has read this pamphlet and, if he has done so, he must have found some inspiration in the strong arguments set forth by Sir Thomas Tait in support of his theme.

I am quoting:

Competition between State owned and operated railways and Company railways is inequitable and unfair to the private investor in the latter. Money for construction and equipment can, generally speaking, be borrowed or obtained by the State on considerable better terms than by companies, and therefore, State railways are not expected or required to earn as large a return on their cost as investors in company railways, especially shareholders look for and should receive. If everything else therefore be equal—an important and improbable proviso—the rates and fares on State railways are liable to be reduced and indeed as a rule are reduced, and train services and other facilities are provided beyond what the traffic and other conditions warrant, and these lower rates and fares and these unjustified facilities must be conceded by competing company railways if they are to obtain their fair share of the traffic.

In view of the possibility, if not the probability, of the Dominion being compelled to take over the Canadian Northern system and the Grand Trunk Pacific railway from Winnipeg to Prince Rupert with its branch lines, the question arises whether in such event the difficulties and disadvantages of State administration, on the one hand, and the injustice of State competition with private enterprise, on the other hand—both of which will be greatly aggravated and increased should the present State railway system be extended from Winnipeg to the Pacific Coast and throughout our Western Provinces—might not be avoided.

They will perhaps answer me that the Government programme, to-day, is but the completion of the work of a former government who had created the Intercolonial. I do not remember the times when the Intercolonial originated, but, if I rightly remember my history, the construction of that line was one of the conditions of the confederation. The maritime provinces did not want to enter into a confederation with the provinces of Quebec, Ontario and the West, unless their communications were made easier with the central provinces and the Northwest territories. As I have already said, that was one of the fundamental conditions of the confederation compact, and I ask the hon. members of this House—the Minister of Finance, in particular—God knows the miseries of all kinds the Intercolonial has caused to every administration. How can you help applying these words of Sir Thomas Tait, which I have just quoted, to the other railways which the Government

want to either take over or buy for their own benefit? The policy inaugurated by the present Government, in pursuance of Bill 125, involves consequences so serious that I might suggest to the Government that this policy is important enough to justify a referendum; just as much as such a consultation would have been justified in the case of conscription. What! We intend taking \$600,000,000 from the public treasury; we would have the country to become the administrator of such a big railway system without even consulting it! If the question was the creation of a new line, I would perhaps not denounce this proposal so vigorously; but, in the face of the situation created by the war, I am asking myself whether it is not inexcusable to govern a country without even consulting it upon such an enormous expenditure.

Here is an entirely new policy, and if we have seen fit to consult the people upon a simple question of tariff and of reciprocity, I ask whether, with greater reason, we should not consult them upon a question which increases their budget and their debt by three times, what they were at the outbreak of the war.

The people of this country are rightly asking themselves: when will this Government stop, is there no limit to their audacity? The answer is easy, although it is an appalling one. It is that before this Parliament expires the present Government are determined upon absolutely draining the public chest. And now for what ends? Is not the public rumour, which is growing, which is increasing day by day, the exact expression of the actual truth? That is to say, that this measure is merely brought about for electoral purposes, to try and swell the campaign funds and to juggle away a verdict from the people.

Mr. Chairman, a measure of such an importance should, it seems to me, have been introduced at the very beginning of the session, so that it might have been actually sifted and also that its adoption especially might not be imposed by means of the closure.

I see the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir George Foster) peacefully reading his paper, he who has very simply laid a terrible Bill upon the Table of this House, a Bill to put back the clock one hour a day, and who has seen fit to consult the people in order to know—as the member for Cape Breton (Mr. McKenzie) has expressed it—at what hour the roosters of the country crowed in the various provinces!