

railway together with a timber transaction and went so far as to have signed contracts prepared for the construction of the Eastern railway over the very ground in question. The Halifax 'Chronicle,' the organ of the Liberal party, came out in large type saying: The contract for the Eastern railway has been signed. That is a matter of absolute knowledge, I can verify it and have verified it by examining the paper itself, and it was announced through the Liberal press of Nova Scotia that the Eastern railway was at last to be built by the local government of Nova Scotia. What happened? Although the announcement was made and the season favourable, nothing was done, and by almost lapse of time the Murray administration was compelled to go to the people of Nova Scotia without having any prospect of the construction of the railway being started. It was then that representatives of the provincial government of Nova Scotia, at that time in sympathy with the Liberal administration at Ottawa, hurried to Ottawa and had consultation after consultation with the previous administration here. I saw gentlemen representing the government of Nova Scotia about the corridors and they wore very long faces for a number of days until finally this government consented to relieve the local administration to the extent at all events of calling for tenders.

Mr. McKENZIE. Will the hon. member please tell us who was here representing the government of Nova Scotia at that time? I was a member of this House then and I would like to know.

Mr. RHODES. I have no doubt these gentlemen did not consult the hon. member for North Cape Breton and Victoria as freely as they did the members of the Cabinet; I say that without disrespect to the hon. gentlemen; but the project was brought down to construct these railways as branches of the Intercolonial railway, in consequence of the difficulties which had been met by the Murray administration in Nova Scotia. I think that fact is well established.

Mr. McKENZIE. I want to tell my hon. friend that these representatives he speaks of were doing all they could to leave that work with the company and prevent the government from taking charge of it. That was their mission here.

Mr. RHODES. Let us assume for the sake of argument that the statement made by the hon. member (Mr. McKenzie) is correct; he will not deny that the Murray government announced through his own press in Nova Scotia that it had signed contracts for the construction by the government of Nova Scotia of these very railways.

Mr. McKENZIE. I do not deny that. That was two or three years ago.

Mr. RHODES. Quite so, but it took a long time before the Murray administration was prepared to admit, although it had announced that the contract was signed, that the railway would not be constructed, and they had to face the people in a general election. I was about to say when interrupted that I doubted the sincerity of the late Liberal administration in calling for contracts on the eve of an election for the construction of these railways as branches of the Intercolonial railway. In making that assertion I do not wish to attribute to the late administration a deliberate intention to deceive the electors of Nova Scotia; it was furthest from my thoughts to make an assertion of that kind, but I have in mind the circumstance that Mr. Murray had announced positively to the people of Nova Scotia that there was a signed contract for the construction of this railway, and, therefore, the bare calling for tenders on the part of the late administration was no guarantee to my mind that the construction of this railway would be undertaken. I have placed myself on record in this House on more than one occasion with respect to the question of branch lines in Nova Scotia. When the Branch Line Railway Bill was brought down by the late government, I announced myself in this House as heartily in favour of it. I was interested to-night in hearing the hon. member for South Renfrew (Mr. Graham) who has some considerable experience in the administration of railways, give us a homily on the value of acquiring the branch lines. That is all very good. I quite agree with him that it is not necessary that a branch line of railway must be a paying concern of itself before it should be acquired. As a matter of fact, it is frequently found that branch lines of railways which do not pay as individual railways become very paying properties when coupled with a trunk line which they serve as feeders. I am heartily in favour of, and I believe it is sound policy on the part of the Intercolonial railway to take over many of the branch lines in Nova Scotia. In fact, I believe it is the duty of the Intercolonial if it is going to serve that country properly, to assume the branch lines from time to time and, so far as that is concerned, to build others. But I want to repeat to the hon. member for Guysborough (Mr. Sinclair) the statement I made half an hour ago, that I believe the course taken by the present Minister of Railways is one which will be in the best interests of the very county which the hon. gentleman represents. Far better that a year should be taken, or