

other day with regard to certain railways in Scotland. There were two railway companies running between Greenock and Edinburgh; they ran in competition for a year and a half, and though rates were reduced to one-eighth of what they were before, there was scarcely any appreciable reduction in the dividends or in the amount received by the companies. Now, until we have the information which I ask for in this motion, we could not take the first step in the consideration of the question of the reduction of freights. I do not say we ought to decrease rates. I do not discuss that question now, but I say that the House should have all necessary information on the subject, if an hon. member should choose to bring it before the House. We could not enter into a discussion of that subject with the imperfect knowledge which our railway companies afford us in the returns they make. I think the whole system of our railway returns ought to receive the careful consideration of the Minister, and that we should have more complete information with regard to the internal trade of the country than we do at present.

Mr. WHITE (Cardwell). I think the hon. gentleman will see that if he could get the information which he wants, it would be exceedingly misleading to the public and, therefore, not valuable for the object he has in view. The peculiarity of our railway freight traffic is that there are certain seasons of the year, as for instance, when the crops have to be moved, when the rolling stock of the railway companies is more than fully occupied for probably three or four months of the year, and when every train, and especially those which are eastward bound, and come over the line to the points of ocean shipment, are all full. Then there are other periods of the year, and perhaps large periods, when there is no such traffic. The effect of the figures which my hon. friend wants would be this, that taking the year all round, it would appear that the rolling stock of the companies would not be fully occupied—their cars would not be entirely filled, and the consequence of that would be the creation of an impression in the country, that if the rates were only reduced, there would be a larger amount of traffic, and the companies would realize that much more, when in reality the effect was due to another circumstance, namely, that during a certain period of the year, their rolling stock was more than employed, while at other seasons there was nothing like so large a quantity of freight to be moved. The effect, therefore, of the figures, if brought down in the bald manner in which they are asked for in the motion of my hon. friend, would be to mislead the public mind on this question, and any arguments based upon them would therefore be fallacious. There is another thing to be borne in mind. As I understand, what the hon. gentleman desires to get by this motion is the amount of freight actually carried on particular trains partially filled, and how much such trains could have carried. That, as I understand it, is what the hon. gentleman asks; but I do not think that is quite what he asks for in his motion, because he asks for the capacity of the companies, having regard to the rolling stock they have altogether, and the amount which is actually engaged in carrying traffic. The difficulty in the way of getting such information is this: that under the present system our railways, the Grand Trunk, the Great Western, the Intercolonial and other roads are perpetually interchanging their cars, and the question of how much they could do with the cars they have would depend entirely on the control they have over those cars, and those cars for a large portion of the time are entirely beyond their control, they are under the control of other companies over whose lines they pass and with which the companies owning them have business relations. So that it would be utterly impossible in that sense to get anything like a statement which would be an accurate one. So with regard to the passenger traffic. The hon. gentleman must know

that the return to his motion would not, if it was in literal accordance with the terms of the motion, give him the information he seeks as to the capacity of the companies as to rolling stock. The same principle applies with regard to the rolling stock of passenger traffic as to that of freight. There are certain periods when the rolling stock is amply occupied, and there are other periods when it is not so well occupied, and when in the nature of the business of this country it cannot be so well occupied. So having regard to these facts in connection with our railway traffic, it seems to me that the information the hon. gentleman seeks to obtain would not be of any real value, even if the railway companies were willing to go to the enormous labor which would be involved in attaining it; in fact, so far from being valuable, it would be entirely misleading to the public mind and might lead to the advocacy of a particular line of railway policy which had no justification in existing condition of our railway traffic.

Mr. MILLS. The less we know the more we know.

Mr. WHITE. Not by any means. We have now two or three important sources of information. We have the reports made to the shareholders of the different railway companies; we have in these the number of passengers they carry and the mileage; we have the extent of their rolling stock, the freight they carry, and the prices per ton, per mile, at which it is carried—in fact, all the information which the hon. gentleman expects to obtain; except the particular analysis of this information which the hon. gentleman now asks for. We have this further fact, and it is an important one, in relation to the reduction of freights. As my hon. friend from Niagara (Mr. Plumb) pointed out, with all the enormous increase of business in this country, our great trunk line has not been able yet to pay a dividend, even on all its preference stock and certainly not on its ordinary stock, and, until it does it would ill become the Government or the Parliament of this country to interfere with its management.

Motion negatived.

THE CLAIM OF THEOTIME BLANCHARD.

Mr. ANGLIN moved for all correspondence relating to the claim of Theotime Blanchard, late Inspector of Weights and Measures for the counties of Gloucester and Restigouche, N.B., for the payment to him of the portion of his salary withheld as his contribution to the Superannuation Fund. He said: The House will probably remember the change made by legislation in the mode of inspection, and in the staff of inspectors; and the question was raised in this House with respect to refunding the amount of money withheld out of the salaries of those officers, in order to pay their contributions to the Superannuation Fund. The Department seemed at first indisposed to refund any sum, the defence set up being that they had not been displaced or removed, but legislated out of existence. A member of the Government, and some hon. members, held the opinion that because those officers were not removed in the ordinary course they had no claim even to have any amount contributed by them refunded. The opinion of the House was, however, so strong that the then Minister of Inland Revenue consented that the money should be refunded. That was done in several cases; but in other cases it had been refused. I ask the attention of the House to one case, the facts of which I am personally cognizant of. In my own county, Mr. Blanchard, who at the time was a member of the Local Legislature, was appointed inspector. He held office until he was legislated out of existence. During that time a certain portion of his salary was withheld on every quarter-day by the Department, under the authority of the Superannuation Act,