

effect by legislation compelling the Canadian Pacific to make changes in its system which its board of directors do not approve as being in the interest of the company. We should go very slow indeed in forcing co-operation unless we are prepared to provoke criticism in Great Britain much louder and more serious than even the complaint of the Grand Trunk shareholders, which would be as the bleat of a sheep compared to the roar of a lion.

To accept complacently the deficits of our National Railways, as in fact we have been doing for nearly ten years, is simply inviting bankruptcy for the Dominion.

I will not duplicate the figures, which I am sure other speakers will give you in detail, more than to say that I should like to point out the fact that, including capital invested, Government guarantees, interest paid and deficits, the total cost to the Dominion of its railway venture is said to exceed \$3,300,000,000. This is \$200,000,000 greater than the national debt of Canada, which stands at \$3,100,000,000. What a happy position we should be in to-day if the country had kept out of this unfortunate business from the start—provided, of course, that we had saved the money and not thrown it away on some equally improvident venture.

In the face of annual deficits of over \$50,000,000 a year, with little or no hope of improvement, the situation is rapidly becoming intolerable. It cannot continue if Canada is to remain solvent. It is amazing that such a large percentage of our population fail to appreciate the situation or concern themselves about it.

The cost of government ownership to date well justifies the fear that disturbs the minds of many thinking Canadians to-day. They prefer to try unification, the other avenue which promises escape from at least a part of the present railway burden. I share with them their grave fears and distrust of government ownership as it stands to-day. Our record in that regard speaks for itself.

However, we must recognize the fact that the great majority of our citizens would not now agree to unification. The only consolidation of our railways the public will at this moment entertain, believe it or not, is government ownership. They fear anything resembling private monopoly, particularly in the West, where it proved so burdensome about thirty or thirty-five years ago. It is still remembered, and doubtless accounts in no small part for the hostility to unification as proposed. Labour, fearful of the curtailment of employment which would result, is also a powerful influence against consolidation.

Hon. Mr. McRAE.

The public have yet to be convinced that the present situation cannot continue. They are not impressed by the findings of parliamentary committees, which they believe are influenced either by party politics or by the private railway. Nor are they impressed by speeches of members of either House of Parliament with which the public's preconceived opinions do not agree; and much less by the proposals or speeches of interested parties. Some method of obtaining for the public's enlightenment, from an authority removed from political or railway influence, an opinion on our railway situation in which they will have confidence, is, I believe, absolutely necessary if we are to make progress in the solution of our railway deficits. Hence the suggestion in my proposal for a board of three judges whose findings on our entire railway problem would carry weight with the country.

I know we have had a number of commissions whose reports are available, and I can appreciate the dislike many honourable members may have to further reports along this line. However, the latest inquiry of this kind is now seven years old. The railway situation has grown much more binding in the meantime.

Committees of your honourable House, during the last five years, have made several inquiries, ending recently with a two-year effort by your Special Railway Committee. And where have we arrived? What have we accomplished? The speech of the leader on this side (Right Hon. Mr. Meighen), I predict, will show clearly, as did the speech of the leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Dandurand), that we have accomplished very little in getting results. I am quite sure that unless the House takes definite action in the matter we shall end up a year hence practically where we are to-day, but with the added deficit for another year. If we permit the situation to drift along for another ten years, we may expect to add another half billion dollars to our national debt in taking care of our railway deficits, not to mention the new capital requirements to which I have already referred.

It is said that a board of judges would not know anything about railways. The same thing might be said about any case which comes before the courts. Judges do not personally know every business which comes before them, yet their judgments are sought, are generally correct, and almost unanimously accepted by the public. So why not in this instance? Not only have I the highest respect for my honoured leader, but I have also the