

of Canada. The Canadian Pacific being such a strong organization, there is to my mind no question about the advantage that would result from its taking over the Canadian Northern. Most people think it would do away with competition. However, the idea of the advantage of competition is a mere fallacy. We have no such thing in Canada as railway competition except in slight and remote instances. Now, under an efficient railway board such as we have, the rates would be regulated and great economies would accrue to the people of the country.

But consider the question a little further. What a gigantic institution the Canadian Pacific railway would be if it absorbed the other two systems. It would practically become the Government of Canada.

Hon. Mr. DOMVILLE: It is now.

Hon. Mr. EDWARDS: It would actually own Canada and would therefore be a mistake. What is the situation? We are, in my opinion, in this difficult position, that, while government ownership may seem, theoretically, to be desirable, it has been found in Canada, by our experience with the Intercolonial, that government ownership is a mistake. I believe also, for the reason which I have already given, that the centralization of the three railways under one management would also be a mistake.

Under the peculiar circumstances and conditions, honourable gentlemen, what are we to do? If it is possible to consummate such an arrangement as would remove the operations of this road absolutely from political considerations or influence, then perhaps Government acquisition of the road may be under the circumstances the best thing. That is what is now suggested—that five men, I think, shall be appointed, representing various interests, who are to become the Dominion Railway Board. Is not that the name of the proposed body? If that can be accomplished and if political influence can be entirely and absolutely eliminated, it is, after all, what may be best to do.

We now come to the question of the taking over of this railway. I have read the Act carefully several times and have read of all the proposals that have been suggested, and it is quite true, I suppose, that the Canadian Government could step in and take possession of the Canadian Northern system; but to do so, I have no doubt, would involve a great many legal and technical difficulties. It appears to me

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that the simpler and better way, the way by which a large saving would be effected for the people of this country, is to adopt the means suggested, namely, to become possessed of the balance of the common stock.

If there is one thing for which I blame my own friends it is this: they have kept finding fault with what the Government suggests, but they have not offered a single alternative. They have not offered any suggestions, so far as I have been able to see, as to what might be done instead of that which is being done, with the exception of the suggestion that the Government might forcibly dispossess the gentlemen who are now in control and itself take possession of the railway.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: Liquidation has been suggested.

Hon. Mr. EDWARDS: Liquidation, or placing the matter in the hands of a receiver, would be a slow, tedious and expensive operation, and my opinion is that any sum which these gentlemen may get under arbitration would be small as compared with the loss to this country in the expenses entailed by the other process.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: If the honourable gentleman will permit me, may I point out that the right honourable leader of the Opposition in the other House has distinctly said that he is opposed to liquidation.

Hon. Mr. EDWARDS: The honourable gentleman refers to my leader in the other House. I have no leader anywhere.

Hon. Mr. CROSBY: I hope the honourable gentleman has some followers.

Hon. Mr. EDWARDS: Well, no. As a rule, people do not accept my views to-day, but in a few years hence they will.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: My honourable friend misunderstands me. I understood that the honourable gentleman from Ottawa (Hon. Mr. Belcourt) suggested liquidation. I did not understand my honourable friend (Hon. Mr. Edwards) to be in favour of liquidation. The right honourable leader of the Opposition in the other House is against liquidation.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: My honourable friend is mistaken. I did not suggest anything. When the honourable gentleman who is now speaking stated that no other suggestion had been made by anybody, I reminded him that liquidation had been suggested. As to the other statement, made by the honourable gentleman from Pictou (Hon. Mr. Tanner), I think he is quite