

Majesty of the capital stock of the Canadian Northern Railway Company—Sir Thomas White (Minister of Finance)—resumed from Monday, August 27, Mr. Dugald Stewart in the Chair.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: I beg to move:

That further consideration of clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4, the amendments, and the title of Bill No. 125 shall be the first business of the committee and shall not further be postponed.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Carried.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Lost.

Motion declared carried: Yeas, 52; Nays, 25.

On section 1—acquisition of shares of Canadian Northern railway authorized:

Mr. JACQUES BUREAU (Three Rivers) (translation): Mr. Chairman, when this resolution was brought before this House some time ago with a view to considering the opportunity of taking this railway line, we had the assurance from the prime minister that on the occasion of this measure being submitted to the Committee of the Whole we would be allowed all necessary time to discuss it. Assurance was also given that we would have at hand all necessary information, so that we might deal intelligently, with the Bill now before us. I submit, Mr. Chairman, that there is not one single man here who, realizing the duties he has to discharge as a member of this House, will venture to say that he has performed these duties and has done so in the light of the small amount of information supplied to this House.

I want to ask you, Mr. Chairman, whether I shall have to address people talking between themselves and paying no attention at all, or address myself to a House whose duty it is to give ear when a member has the floor?

As I say, then, we are called to pronounce ourselves on a measure by which this country is to be saddled with an enormous indebtedness, and we are not only asked to assume the liabilities of a bankrupt company, but also to agree that the people may be made liable to pay this corporation or its promoters a sum of \$60,000,000 or \$100,000,000 for the privilege of laying a further burden of \$600,000,000 upon the taxpayers of this country.

The first reason why I object to our taking this measure into consideration, is that we have not enough information as to what we are purchasing. We are told that we are taking over 9,500 miles of railroad, but we

[Sir Robert Borden.]

have not had before the House any information as to the present condition of this railroad line. By taking over the main line, we are also getting control of many sections and branch lines; we do not know what these sections are, we do not know what their liabilities may be, neither do we know what portion is guaranteed by the parent company. There is one of these branch lines, Mr. Chairman, which I know better than the other ones; it is that of the Quebec and Lake St. John, and I beg leave to state that it is a perfectly useless acquisition, as this section is in competition with the National Transcontinental. I say in competition, but I should not use such an expression. The Quebec and Lake St. John railway, if we consider the recent construction of the National Transcontinental, becomes perfectly useless, I might even say an actual danger; in fact, this line has been badly built from its very inception and its operation is most expensive. During the winter months, if they try to clear away the snow and the men use the least strength in shovelling the snow away the rails go off with the snow and the embankment is taken away. Such is, Mr. Chairman, the line the Government are taking over, when they buy this Quebec and Lake St. John branch-road.

But, when we discuss those matters, the Minister of Finance answers: Why, gentlemen, why are you asking for information as to the value of these lines or as to the condition of these lines? We are not buying the engines, we are not buying the stations, we are not buying the physical property of that system, we are only buying the stock.

Well, Mr. Chairman, I should like to know what that stock is worth. We are taking over the Canadian Northern Railway company. What is that Canadian Northern Railway company? Is it the interests of which the Minister of Finance is the representative, or is it the railway line which runs over the continent? Is it the stock that constitutes the main interest of the road, or is it the physical property?

Mr. Chairman, there is something besides this road itself, besides the stock used to keep it running, the real estate comprised in its right of way, its stations and the lands given to the company as a subsidy. It is stated that, in the province of Quebec, a certain quantity of land has been given as a kind of subsidy for the building of branch lines. Pertinently, I say that, if an allusion is thus made to the lands given to the Quebec and Lake St. John railway,