

The mention of "other roads" is made, and whatever is done under this Bill will govern other roads as well as the Northern Railway. I have no doubt that the Credit Valley Railway is a very meritorious work, and that it should get into the City of Toronto. I am not altogether, and have not been, in accord with the system of starting railways on a sort of roving commissions by which municipalities are involved in a large amount of debt for which they receive no benefits. As I understand it, there is plenty of room for the Credit Valley Railway to get into Toronto, if they choose to pay for it; but they wish to compel other roads, whose business is growing and who are already being crowded, to give up part of their property which they have made valuable, and which, far as I have yet discovered, they have a right to hold. As regards their legal rights, it is not a question exactly which we should declare upon without more thorough investigation than is likely to be made in a Committee like this. What we are charged with more particularly are questions of policy rather than legal questions. I have received piles of the Credit Valley Railway literature, but my life is too short to read it through, and I would rather judge of the question upon certain general principles which can appeal to everybody, and which everybody can understand. I am not prepared to accept the preamble of this Bill as it stands. I know that—

Dr. ORTON—Mr. Chairman, there are counsel here representing both sides, and I think we should hear them before proceeding further.

Mr. PLUMB—This is the Railway Committee of Parliament, and I think that gentlemen who are members of Parliament attend for the purpose of discussing those bills. I do not know that we are to make all our rights and discussions subservient to paid counsel who are brought here by interested parties. (Cries of "Question! question!") I do not think it lies within our province to take up the question and decide it, as this preamble will decide it, without having very much more definite information, and very much clearer legal knowledge of the rights of the parties than this Committee can possibly have. I do not think it is proper to ask Parliament to settle a question which is clearly within the province of the courts; but, if it comes up as a question of policy, I say I do not think it is proper to force the Grand Trunk Railway and the Northern Railway to admit other lines upon the grounds that are necessary for their own business. If these grounds are not necessary for their own business, it is another question. Even if the Government owns the property, the railway companies have vested rights there. They have been running over this land for years; they have sunk large amounts of capital in their undertakings, and I do think there are two sides to this question, and it ought to be looked at from both. I am opposed to this preamble, and I do not think, at this stage of the discussion, we are prepared to adopt it.

Hon. Mr. MACDOUGALL—It seems to me that Mr. Plumb's suggestion is a little in advance of the principle of this Committee. This is a very important question; private rights are involved, and here are three distinct interests. All these three interests or parties are represented by engineers and by counsel, and the first point should be to allow the promoters of this Bill to show cause why it should be entertained. I move that the promoters of the Bill be heard.

Mr. HAGGART—I move that Mr. Wells be heard before this Committee on behalf of the Credit Valley Railway Company.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. WELLS—I am very much obliged to the Committee for giving me this opportunity to state our case, and I am only sorry that the duty of making the statement has fallen upon me very unexpectedly. The matter was placed in the hands of counsel, but, unfortunately, he was unable to attend, and the duty has been thrown upon me so suddenly that I am afraid I cannot do it the justice that its great importance demands. The Credit Valley Railway Company was incorporated, as you are aware, under a provincial