

I also think it is a matter of interest to all.

Just why the questions should be directed at the premier was not so clear. The companies specifically stated in their offer that it was made in that form to avoid further competitive bidding, and remembering the reluctance on their part in the past to submit offers and the conditions of secrecy which were imposed on the government when these offers were submitted, their statement need not be doubted. Further than that, when the present traffic agreement was made with the Canadian National Railway a year or more ago, it was violently attacked by opposition members in the legislature on the ground that it was discriminatory against all Canadian Pacific Railway points and the government was urged to make every effort to secure a joint freight rate. That suggestion undoubtedly was the origin of the idea of a joint offer, for in no other way could a joint through freight rate to both Canadian Pacific and Canadian National points be secured.

"In case of a sale of the road now, joint operation would probably mean little or no change if the present arrangement so far as handling all traffic would be concerned.

Mr. DUNNING: Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order. What my hon. friend is reading may have something to do with the lines now in existence in that part of Alberta, but it certainly has nothing to do with the section under discussion, which relates to an extension.

Mr. HEPBURN: If the hon. Minister of Railways will be patient he will see that I am leading up to the point. I want to show that there is no unanimity of opinion in regard to the feasibility of this railway, and before I have proceeded very far I think he will understand.

The route of the proposed extension from Wembley to Hythe has been criticized by many in this district. Representations have been made to the Minister of Railways—

And so on. Now, if there is a difference of opinion out there with regard to this railway, I do not see why parliament should be asked to grant this charter. Why do not the promoters apply to the provincial legislature. If this charter is granted and the line is surveyed, it is likely that settlers will go into the district anticipating that they will get railway facilities, and when these are not forthcoming pressure will be brought to bear on the Dominion government to build the road. It appears to me that the Alberta government is passing the buck, so to speak. They have it in their own power to secure a charter from the local legislature.

Mr. ADSHEAD: Can the Alberta legislature grant a charter for a road in the province of British Columbia?

Mr. HEPBURN: Let the Alberta government negotiate with the British Columbia government. The Dominion government have plenty on their chest at present without taking on anything more. A survey was made in 1911, and the then Alberta government, presided over by our present Minister of the Interior (Mr. Stewart), refused to guarantee the bonds for a railway over this same route. I have a map showing this particular part of the country.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. HEPBURN: I am not the least disturbed by all the noise hon. members care to make.

The CHAIRMAN: Order.

Mr. HEPBURN: I welcome interruptions; I am not the least bit disturbed. Let me point out that clause (a) deals with the country to be served. I will read clause (a):

An extension of its main line of railway, from mile 357 at or near Spirit river in the province of Alberta, by the most feasible route and in a generally westerly direction a distance of 102 miles more or less to a point in township 77 to 78, range 18, west of the sixth meridian in the province of British Columbia.

We have the reports of the Dominion land surveyors as published officially by the Department of the Interior in regard to the territory proposed to be traversed by this railway. This report was submitted in 1911. I quote the following, with reference to township 79, range 13:

The Spirit River pack-trail from township 79, range 14, is the best route to this township. The soil is from three to six inches of black loam with clay subsoil and would make good farming land. The surface is nearly all covered with poplar and willow scrub, but there are scattered prairie openings. It is badly broken up by Pouce Coupé river and by the valley of a creek which runs westerly across the township near its centre.

It is also interesting to read the description of township 78, range 13 also in the proposed line of railway:

Our pack-trail from township 77 was the only way to reach this township. The soil is from two to three inches of black loam with clay subsoil and some gravel and clay. It would make only fair farming land. The surface is nearly all covered with poplar and willow scrub. There is a high range of hills along the south and east of the township, while here and there ledges of rock crop out near the top of the hill.

He adds:

Hay is very scarce.

The description of another township in this route, township 78, range 7, is given by J. B.