

course, I have no right to speak of it and can only give it as a passing opinion—the best minds of the Conservative party to-day are hostile to the principle of government ownership and operation.

CONSERVATIVES OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

I can cite, without having quotations to give, the *Montreal Gazette*, one of the most highly respected of the Conservative journals. This newspaper has been made its attacks on the principle of government ownership and its declarations that the government has no business to own and operate railways. And I venture to say that that paper represents the best class of public opinion in the Conservative party. We have in the ranks of the opposition an hon. member who is more or less an expert in the matter of railway matters. My hon. friend from South Lanark (Mr. Haggart), and I think I am justified in saying that, in all his past speeches he has never had a word to say in favour of government ownership of railways.

My hon. friend to-day will hardly claim that he is in favor of the principle of government ownership, and even in this debate, although allusion has been made generally to the question by my hon. friend in one or two cases, he has never gone beyond what I might call that flirtatious method in which the leader of the opposition is inclined to discuss it. They talk of government ownership, but take great care not to give evidence for it. They have quoted the opinion of my hon. friend the ex-Minister of Railways (Mr. Blair). One would think they would attach more importance to the opinions of eminent men in their own ranks. However, since they have quoted Mr. Blair, let me remind them that the last votes which Mr. Blair ever gave in this House, so far as I can see from the records, were two votes which he gave against motions in favour of government ownership.

SIR JOHN MACDONALD HOSTILE TO GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

I have said that the strong men in the Conservative party have been against government ownership. We have had at an earlier stage, in the speech of the hon. member for South Essex (Mr. Cowan), a quotation from the speech of Sir John Macdonald which will bear repetition. It was from a speech delivered in 1881 in connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway:

The government has every right to use all their exertions in order to relieve themselves and the country of the obligation of building this road, (the Canadian Pacific Railway) and of the still greater obligation of running it. We see this in the Intercolonial and in every public work. Why, Sir, it is actually impossible for the government to run that railroad satisfactorily. The men we put on the road, from the porter upwards, became civil servants. If one is put on from any cause whatever, he is said to be a political hack; if he is removed it is said his removal was on account of his political opinions. If a cow is killed on the road a motion is made in respect of it by the member of the House who has the owner's vote as support. The responsibility, the expense, the worry and annoyance of a government having charge of such a work, are such that, for these causes alone, it was considered advisable to get rid of the responsibility.

The hon. gentleman there had reference to the attitude of his government on the question of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

HON. ALEX. MACKENZIE'S WORK UNDONE.

If we are to understand that these gentlemen have to-day become champions of government ownership, let me remind them that the government of the late Mr. Alexander Mackenzie built many miles of road as a government work, and the first thing the opposition did when they came into power was to present that road, to the value of \$37,000,000 as a free gift to the Canadian Pacific Railway. That is the record, Sir, of the Conservative party, and I have given the opinion of Sir John Macdonald. I have shown you that in carrying out that opinion, where the good, honest Mr. Alexander Mackenzie had built a government road and given the country the advantage, if it be an advantage, of government construction, these hon. gentlemen opposite came in and presented it as a free gift to the Canadian Pacific Railway. We need not go so far back as the opinions of Sir John Macdonald. We need not rely on the opinions of Sir John. That distinguished statesman has long since passed away.