

up these gentlemen. The position that some of these gentlemen opposite are to-day illustrates the position that a Government cannot fail to get into which is a mere opportunist government. That government or that man who acts without principle must be inconsistent; no backbone of principle will run through its career. And to-day we find the Minister of Railways, with his bland and powerful advocacy and with the aplomb with which he always speaks on any subject, the air of a man who settles the thing when he speaks; we find him talking very differently now from what he did last year, and yet he expects this Parliament and he expects the country to accept his words. He expects us to accept his assurances now as he expected us to accept entirely different assurances from him only last session. Here is what my hon. friend from Yale (Mr. Bostock) said last year:

The danger we are under in that country is the same as we are under in the west Kootenay country with regard to Rossland. The natural tendency is for people to come into the country from the south, and we are very much in danger of all our trade and business being dragged that way. We have really to fight against the natural outline of the country, and try to direct the trade north instead of letting it go south. So that, speaking in the interest of the country itself, I think we have to take hold of this question at once and do the best we can with it.

That is the language of the hon. gentleman who is promoting this Bill; and now he is promoting this railway to do the very opposite. When a man, in the course of one short twelvemonth, blows hot and cold like that, what weight are you to attach to what he says or does or proposes? I think my hon. friend from Vancouver (Mr. McInnes) read the words of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright)—very emphatic, very suggestive, very eloquent, as they could not fail to be, and at the same time, considering all the past, very extraordinary, if now, at the end of twenty months, anything is extraordinary that comes to us from these hon. gentlemen. Then we had our hon. friend from Alberta (Mr. Oliver), and here is what he said on the subject of our trade with that region:

Our local position is this: At present North Alberta supplies grain, hay and vegetables, and South Alberta cattle, to the mining regions, over the Canadian Pacific Railway main line from Calgary, and its branch lines and steamboat connections. Our competitors, who supply by far the largest part of the produce consumed in Kootenay, are the farmers of the Palouse district of eastern Washington and northern Idaho, for whom the city of Spokane is the trade centre.

These are the competitors at the present moment; and the railway policy we are here discussing is to fortify those competitors to compete with the farmers of northern and southern Alberta and eastern and western Assiniboia. When we have the statement of so high an authority as the hon. member for Alberta, when we have the

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weighty authority of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and when we have the statement of the policy of the Government made by the Minister of Railways last year, and such a contradictory policy to-day, are not we from the North-west—nay, is not every member of Parliament—bound to ask the Government, what is their policy at the present moment? Did the Minister of Railways express the Government policy last session, or does he express it to-day? Or, if he does not, will some one who is higher in the hierarchy of Liberal leadership, get up and state to us what is the policy of the Liberal party on this question? In fact, I am told on pretty good authority—I would surprise hon. gentlemen if I told them the authority—that the Minister of Railways and Canals in the Railway Committee did not express the policy of the Government.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS (Mr. Blair). Let us have your authority.

Mr. DAVIN. I said I could not give it. Why, when I get a Cabinet secret like that, does the hon. gentleman think that I am going to give it away? Why, Mr. Chairman, if I gave away the gentleman who gives me the Cabinet secrets of hon. gentlemen opposite, I would never hear anything again. No, Sir; I will veil it under that convenient form: "a little bird told me"; but the little bird, I believe, spoke by the book. My hon. friend reminds me—I forgot that—that at the first two meetings of the Railway Committee we had the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Tarte) sitting next to the Chairman, and not far from him the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton), and when anything was said in favour of the Kettle Valley Railway, we had the Napoleonic frown of the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Public Works shook his ambrosial locks, and looked dreadful things. What is the meaning of it? The heavenly twins of the Cabinet—the Castor of Quebec and the Pollux of Manitoba—were both against the Kettle Valley Railway, and they are not here to-day. We are often told by the press that the hon. gentleman who sits in that gallery—if I may so refer to him—who communicates hints beforehand of what is to be the policy of the Government, and who shapes in his great brain future leaders, has declared what a powerful mind the Minister of the Interior has—he is a young Napoleon, one of the masters of the party; and he ought to be here to tell us what the policy of the Government on this question is. Then, the hon. member for Alberta, said:

Until February last year their rate on grain was 25 cents per 100 to Nelson, which is a central point in Kootenay, while our rate was 50 cents per 100. Even with the duty in our favour we were not able to do business. In February last (no doubt in view of possible competition),