

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY
COMPANY.

DISCUSSION IN COMMITTEE UNDER
CLOSURE RULE.

The House again in Committee on Bill No. 70, to incorporate Canadian National Railway Company and respecting Canadian National Railways.—Mr. Boivin in the Chair.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Mr. Chairman, I move that at this sitting clauses 2, 3, 16, 20, 21, 22, 29, and proposed 31 and 32, the first schedule and proposed second schedule, preamble and title of this Bill be the first business of the Committee and that consideration of same be not further postponed.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the motion?

Mr. DEVLIN: Mr. Chairman, this rule—

The CHAIRMAN: Do I understand that the hon. gentleman is rising to a point of order?

Mr. DEVLIN: No, to the discussion of clause 20.

The CHAIRMAN: The motion is not debatable. I have just put the question upon the motion.

Mr. DEVLIN: I am not going to debate the motion; I am going to begin the discussion of clause 20.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman would be out of order at the present stage.

Mr. DEVLIN: In debating clause 20?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. DEVLIN: I may do it in a moment's time?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Motion adopted; yeas 98, nays 34.

On section 2—Term of office of directors—Vacancy—Annual meeting.

Mr. DEVLIN: Mr. Chairman, it is a peculiar thing that history should in some cases repeat itself, because those who were in the House in the year 1917 will remember that the Act to purchase the Canadian Northern Railway was passed under the rule of closure, and that any hon. gentlemen who were against the granting of large sums of money were of necessity debarred from criticising those grants through the fact that free speech was then refused to what up to that date was a free Parliament. I say, Mr. Chairman, that history sometimes repeats itself. We find ourselves to-day in

this peculiar position that we are considering the first important measure that has been brought before Parliament this session, and are debarred from giving it proper consideration through the same rule of closure. In other words, before the war we were told that we were going to fight for a free Parliament. The war is over, and what are we face to face with to-day? I am sorry to have to say so, but I want to say it with all the energy that lies in me, we are face to face with a Government that imposes once again upon the discussion of an important subject, involving millions of the people's money, the rule of gag. It was surprising to many of us to witness honourable members seated opposite, who, upon other occasions, stood for freedom of speech, stand up to-day and say that on this question, which has simply engaged the attention of the House for two or three days, there should not be liberty of speech. I hope that hon. gentlemen who voted that way will understand the full import of their vote, and that henceforward as far as they are concerned they do not stand for a free, but for a trammelled Parliament.

Millions of dollars have been spent upon the Canadian Northern Railway, which is to be taken over by this company. Indeed, the company has been formed without any consultation of the members of Parliament. The Canadian Northern Railway has, in name, become the Canadian National Railway. In the Ottawa Citizen are published the times of arrival and departure of the Canadian Northern trains between Toronto and Ottawa, being the hours of the trains of the Canadian National Railway. The directors were named by the Government before the incorporation of the company, and their salaries are being paid by the Government. Everything in connection with the working of this system is and will continue to be under the absolute control of the Government—and when I say "absolute control," I mean such control as will be allowed by the Canadian Northern Railway system. The man who drew up this Bill was not an officer of the Crown, not one of the legal advisors of the Department of Railways, but the lawyer of the Mackenzie and Mann—I should say, of the Canadian Northern system, Mr. Lash. He gives the Government his Bill and says: Now, you be a lot of little dummies; dance, but pass the Bill. The Government accepts Mr. Lash's Bill, and, through the Acting Prime Minister, says to the House: This is Mr. Lash's Bill, and it must be passed. We ask for information,