

Island took the matter in hand as he understood they had done. He would be prepared to give any further explanations that might be desired regarding the measure. The Bill now presented to the House was exactly similar to the one of last Session with the exception of the proviso to the 15th section, and the subsection of section 16 and section 17. Section 17 simply provided that any acquired rights that this Company might possess on Prince Edward Island should be reserved, and the other two sections were simply intended to make the Bill more complete by providing for certain circumstances that might possibly arise.

Hon. J. H. CAMERON asked what would be the position supposing no right of pre-emption was exercised, but an absolute stop was put to the monopoly.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE—I do not exactly understand my hon. friend. Does he mean our position, or the position of the Company?

Hon. J. H. CAMERON—My hon. friend says the opinion of the law officers is that only certain matters can be estimated in damages. Other parties have given opinions that something very different can be estimated in damages. But what I want to understand is supposing, instead of the right of pre-emption being exercised that the whole thing was put at an end, so that the cable was useless is the damage merely to be estimated as the hon. gentleman has stated, or has he any view on that subject?

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE said he had a very decided view on the subject, and that was that they had nothing to do with the question of damages. That did not concern them. What concerned them was; were they doing any damage to any parties who had any right to anything at their hands. Did the company possess any privileges legal or equitable within the Dominion of Canada that the Government were bound to consider. He did not think they did. But in any case, supposing that some party was bound to pay some compensation, the compensation could only extend to rights acquired under the act of 1854. That he took it to be quite clear so far as a layman was capable of forming an opinion upon the subject. Of course he gave his own opinion with great deference, and in a matter of this sort it might not be worth much, but the opinion of the

English law officers of the Crown was worth a great deal, as was also the opinion of the hon. gentleman opposite, a distinguished lawyer in this country; but in a matter of this sort he was bound, so far as legal opinions had any weight, to be guided by the opinions of the law officers of the Crown. But he did not for a moment admit that this was a matter that concerned us further than that it was desirable to present a fair view of the whole subject to the House in introducing this Bill. This company claimed that because they were allowed practically to enjoy a monopoly for twenty years they should be permitted to enjoy it for the future. That was a claim that, of course, the Government could not admit; it was based on neither legal nor equitable grounds. The company practically received notice from the Colonial Ministry in 1857 that nothing in the direction of a monopoly could be permitted by the Imperial Parliament, even if the Provincial Legislature was disposed to sanction it.

Hon. J. H. CAMERON approved of the proposal to send the Bill to the Railway Committee, where all the parties interested could be heard. The leader of the Government had very fairly laid the whole matter before the House from his point of view, and aside from that statement, any discussion, until the Bill came before the Railway Committee, would be premature. When it came before the Committee, other considerations than these submitted by the Premier might be brought forward, which might lead to other conclusions than those arrived at by the hon. gentleman. He would not now take up the various clauses of the Bill, but in view of the importance to this country of not being suddenly deprived of telegraphic communication with the other side, he thought it would have to be considered how far it would be advisable to adopt the concluding terms of the 14th clause.

Hon. Mr. MACKENZIE said that while it was convenient to have a Bill of this sort considered in Committee, it should be discussed in the House in the first place. Either it was right in principle or it was wrong. If any members thought it was wrong in principle, now was the time to oppose it, and show wherein it was wrong. If it was wrong in principle it should not go to the Rail-