

now awaiting solution at the hands of this government.

Mr. Speaker, when the government concluded to hand this whole question over to a commission of experts, and promised to the House the appointment of such commission, every member of this House and every man in the country who thinks on these things at all, believed it was a wise course to pursue. It can easily be understood that members of the cabinet might not be experts on a question of this kind. Even if they were, other duties might prevent them from giving that attention to the subject that it deserved. It was therefore a matter of some surprise, Sir, when the government intimated their intention of bringing down a Bill and dealing with the question themselves. So, Sir, we have the Bill and the contract before us.

The right hon. leader of the government, in presenting this Bill to the House, said there was a feeling throughout the country, that was universal in every Canadian heart, that the time had come when Canada must have another transcontinental railway. Well, Sir, I have moved about among Canadians, and I must say that I have not discovered that feeling, nor have I met with any person who suggested such an idea. I thought we had arrived at that period of development in our history when railways would be built according as that occasion required. What I had expected was that this commission would have been appointed at once, and when in due time it brought down its report, the government would deal with it in whatever way seemed to them most proper. The government, however, have seen fit to ignore the railway commission completely and undertake to build a transcontinental railway without any previous inquiry into the matter. We who oppose that policy are declared to be opposed to all railway development. Because we do not see eye to eye with hon. gentlemen opposite, they taunt us with being against the building of any railway. Let me tell hon. gentlemen opposite that we on this side are as anxious for the development of the country as they are and more so. The history of our party in the past affords abundant proof of that assertion. No party could be more willing that railways should be built whenever and wherever it can be

Mr. VROOMAN.

shown that they are necessary, but we cannot agree with hon. gentlemen opposite as to the necessity of this scheme at all, more particularly because, even if the proposed railway be built, it will not effect the object intended.

I am opposed to this scheme, and I shall attempt to state briefly a few of the reasons why I intend to vote against it. In the first place, I am opposed to it because it will not answer the purposes for which it is undertaken. It will not cheapen freight rates. In introducing this Bill, the right hon. the First Minister said :

We consider that it is the duty of all those who sit within these walls by the will of the people, to provide immediate means whereby the products of these new settlers may find an exit to the ocean at the least possible cost.

The solution of the transcontinental problem involves our ability to place upon the markets of the world the products of Canada at the lowest possible cost and in the shortest possible time.

But it is generally admitted that this new railway cannot possibly assist in reducing the rates. Those who support it do not contend that it will have that result. On the contrary they all admit that it will not be able to compete with water rates. There can be no doubt, as has been shown in this debate, that all-rail transportation cannot compete with water-ways or with combined water and rail routes, and I have much pleasure in endorsing the stand in that respect taken by the hon. member for St. Mary's division of Montreal (Hon. Mr. Tarte, in whose opinions on this question I have confidence, because ever since I have had a seat in this House he seems to have given it a great deal of study and has become possessed of a great deal of valuable information on it. He gave in his speech the other day some figures, to which I would draw the attention of the House, as proving the point I have just made :

The distance from Chicago to Buffalo by rail is a little over 500 miles, and the distance by lake is 889 miles. In spite of that, the lake vessels are carrying from Chicago to-day about 40 per cent of the flour and 70 per cent of the wheat.

So that these lake vessels carry 70 per cent of the whole of the wheat carried, more than twice as far as it would have to be carried