

would have come in but for these hotels. The company has erected smelters in the mining districts, it has opened collieries in the Rocky Mountains, it is putting in operation a system of irrigation which will make of Calgary another Grenada. It has covered the great lakes with lines of steamers, it has established lines of ocean steamers plying both from the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts. And will the hon. gentleman pretend that if this railway had been built as a government enterprise all these subsidiary enterprises would have been attempted? Why, the thought is absurd. I know what the hon. gentleman's answer will be. He will tell me that there has been complaints, especially in the new provinces against the tolls of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company; that the railway was not properly discharging the duties it owed to the public. I am aware of these complaints. I believe that some of them were well founded, but what is the remedy after all? Suppress private enterprise—no, but subject the company to control through the government and through parliament. Therefore, on this question I have this to say to my friends on the other side of the House: We know where we are at the present time; they stand for national government operation of railways, and we stand for the control of railways by the government of parliament.

In regard to telephones and telegraphs the remarks of my hon. friend also have been just as inconclusive and just as elusive as his remarks about railway ownership. But, in order to do him no injustice I will quote what he said upon this part of his programme:

It has been demonstrated—

Said he—

—in Great Britain that telegraphs and telephones can be successfully operated in connection with the Post Office Department. I see no reason why a similar system should not be inaugurated and carried out successfully in Canada. Few people realize that at the present time Canada owns and operates 6,586 miles of telegraph lines. These lines have not been remunerative for the reason that they have been established in thinly settled portions of the country where private enterprise could find no adequate return. If we are prepared to invest national capital in thinly peopled and unremunerative localities, why should we hesitate in those portions of the country where operations can be carried on at a profit? I do not forget the necessity that our great railways must be equipped with telegraph and telephone lines, nor do I forget the principle of justice to invested capital which I have already invoked. Having regard to these considerations, our policy should include the establishment, after due investigation, of a great system of national telegraphs and telephones under conditions which shall be just to capital already invested in these enterprises.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

Sir, the central argument which is found in this paragraph is simply this, that because at the present time we have some 6,000 miles of telegraph lines which are unproductive, which bring no return, therefore, we should have telegraph lines in those parts of the country where we can expect a return. Could anything be more fallacious? It is quite true that we have 6,000 miles of telegraph lines and if we have it is not from choice, it is not because we favour that policy, but we have built these telegraph lines where no company would build them because there was no return to be had from them. We built them simply on account of the national ends to be attained. More than half of these telegraph lines are on the lower St. Lawrence and on the gulf shores intended as an aid to navigation, and with our present system of telegraph lines wireless telegraphy, telephones, buoys and lights, it is our intention to make the St. Lawrence route from Belle Isle to Montreal as safe for ships as the streets of a city are for pedestrians. Already, with our equipment, imperfect as it is, we have had a reduced number of casualties, and this past year we have been singularly free from them. Should a casualty take place the telegraph line enables notice to be sent to Quebec, and immediately help is rushed forward to save life and property. But, my hon. friend asks: If we do this in a part of the country where no returns are to be expected why should we not do it also in those parts of the country where there should be some return? For the very obvious reason that those parts of the country are already served by telegraph lines. There is no necessity for having any other lines there. My hon. friend must recognize that because he says:

I do not forget the necessity that our great railways must be equipped with telegraph and telephone lines, nor do I forget the principle of justice to invested capital which I have invoked. Having regard to these considerations, our policy should include the establishment, after due investigation, of a system of national telegraphs and telephones under conditions which shall be just to capital already invested in those enterprises.

What does he mean by this? Does he mean that we are going to expropriate existing telegraph lines? As to this my hon. friend is silent. Does he mean that we are going to build rival telegraph lines? As to this my hon. friend is equally silent; in fact, to these conundrums silence is the best answer that he can give. However, in one statement he is perfectly clear. It is that before we commit ourselves to such a programme there should be due investigation. Indeed, it is well that this matter should be investigated because when the matter is investigated my hon. friend will find that the statement with which he opened his remarks on this question: