

the votes for railway subsidies in addition to the ordinary appropriations, and he appears to think that by putting these big figures before the country he can create alarm. Now let us look for a moment at the history of a railway subsidy; how does it generally come about? There is a section of the country where there is either no railway at all or inadequate railway facilities, and the people make up their mind that they would like to have a railway. They have not any very clear idea of how it can be brought about, and so they come and ask the government to help them. The government, finding that there is a field for a railway in that part of the country, agree to give a subsidy for it if the people can find a company to do the work; and then the subsidy, perhaps a million dollars, is put into the votes, and the hon. gentleman adds it to the bill which he puts before the House at the close of the session. Perhaps two or three years pass and nothing is done. The people are discouraged, and they send a deputation down here to say that they had hoped that somebody was going to build the road, but they have been disappointed, and they hope that the government will renew the subsidy for another term. Again the subsidy appears in the estimates, and again my hon. friend puts it in his bill, though it has not cost the government a penny. At the end of the second term, perhaps a company comes along and says, we think there is a chance of doing business, and if you will renew the subsidy, we will build the road. So the subsidy is brought down again, and my hon. friend for the third time puts it into his bill of expenditures. By and by the company undertakes the work and makes some progress; but it probably finds that it cannot finish it within the specified time. It comes and says to the government, give us this subsidy for a further term and we will complete the road; and the Minister of Railways puts it among the railway subsidies for the fourth time and for the fourth time the hon. gentleman has a chance of adding it in his bill. Not one dollar of the subsidy has been paid out of the public treasury, but my hon. friend has had plenty of fun in adding a million dollars to his budget every year. I have taken a list of the railway subsidies voted from 1899 down to 1906, and I find that during that time they amounted to \$39,131,159. Now according to the annual bill which my hon. friend presents, we must have spent that amount; but the actual fact is that the expenditure on railway subsidies during that whole period was just \$18,319,000, or much less than one-half of the amount of the subsidies voted. So that when my hon. friend is adding these sums to his bill of expenditures every year, he is creating needless alarm; it is another cry of wolf, where there is no wolf.

Public Debt—a Comparison.

Then my hon. friend becomes much disturbed about the condition of the public debt of Canada, constantly conveying the impression that there has been some alarming addition to it. Now, there is no foundation for any statement of the kind; on the contrary, the debt statement which this government is able to present is of the most gratifying character. The increase of the net debt from 1878 to 1896, a period of 18 years during which our Conservative friends were in power, was \$118,135,000; that is, an average of a little more than six and a half millions per annum. The increase of the net debt from 1897 down to the close of the last fiscal year under this government, a period of eleven and three-fourth years, including a considerable sum for the Transcontinental Railway, is \$19,474,376. The average increase per year under the Conservative government was \$6,563,000; the average increase per year under this government was \$1,657,393. That is the best possible answer to the inference my hon. friend seeks to draw, that we have added largely to the public debt. But there is another way of viewing