

ministerial journals to resort to it, in defence of the charter under consideration. A prominent administration organ declares that the excellences of the scheme agreed upon are so apparent that hostile criticism of the provisions must be taken as synonymous with hostility to the construction of the road. Such a declaration reaches the very climax of absurdity, and the implied threat ought to be as offensive to the press and people of a free country as an attempt to burke a fair discussion by moving the previous question.

Coming to the charter itself, and looking only at what may be called the principles underlying its provisions, there seems to be enough in it to prompt serious consideration, if not to create alarm. The most important, most dangerous, and most insidious characteristic of all is the substitution of executive for legislative control over the undertaking. To such an extent has this been carried, that the charter is declared in so many words "to have the force and effect of an Act of the Parliament of Canada," in so far as its provisions are not inconsistent with previous Acts. The full extent of the power thus conferred on the Governor in Council can only be clearly understood by recalling the provisions of the Pacific Railway Act and comparing them with those of the charter. It is true that the termini of the road have been fixed by the Act, but with great vagueness; while the location of the whole route lies with the Governor in Council. It is also true that the amount of the Government subsidy has been fixed; but the proportion of land and money to be paid to the Company at any one time must be determined by agreement between the Government and the Company. It is further provided that the road must be commenced within two years and completed within ten; but the time for completing any specified portion of the road must be determined by agreement between the Government and the Company. What power or control over the road in any shape, Parliament has reserved to itself, is difficult to perceive, except the all-important indirect one of providing for the raising of the subsidy money. Had it been possible for the late House of Commons to divest itself of that privilege, or had it been asked to do so, its action gives us no good ground for believing that it would have refused to comply. No such stretch of executive power was ever before conferred by a Canadian Act of Parliament; none such has ever been hinted at in Britain since the inauguration of responsible government in the days of William III.

Scarcely less dangerous is the theory of the Company formed under the provisions of the charter. That theory combines all the worst features of a government railway project and a joint stock company, and throws away the best elements of both. The Government supplies all the funds and evades the responsibility by means of a chartered company, which is, in reality, not much more than an illusory figment. The Company puts no money