

taxation which they have loaded on the people during the past two years, I cannot see that any great credit is due to them. However, we will wait and see what is in store for us, and hope for the best.

The honourable gentleman from Lambton (Hon. Mr. Pardee) made reference to the phenomenal success that has accompanied the operations of the Canadian National Railways System during 1923. I entirely agree with the honourable gentleman that the Canadian National Railway was operated successfully during last year. I would further point out that the situation of the railway has been steadily improving for four years past, and rapidly since the actual consolidation of the Canadian National Railway and the Grand Trunk Systems. I submit, honourable gentlemen, that the progress made in 1923 ought to have been made in 1922, and that if the Government had not delayed the actual consolidation of these systems for a year after it came into power the benefits to be derived from consolidation would have been enjoyed by the people a year earlier, and the \$20,000,000 surplus, to which they refer with considerable pride might have been enjoyed a year ago.

The Canadian National System is bound to succeed if it is left alone and not interfered with. It was said in another place only a day or so ago that there was absolutely no Government interference in the operation of the railway. So far as I know, that is true in the main, but not altogether. There has come to my knowledge evidence of such misuse of the Canadian National Railway in the by-elections of Halifax and Kent as would merit the strongest condemnation and censure of the officials of the railway who were responsible. I do not believe the executive head of the railway is responsible for it, because if he were, similar tactics would be indulged in on all parts of the system. Honourable gentlemen know that it is the custom of all railways to enlarge their staffs for maintenance of way and building construction during the summer months and to lay them off at a later period; but do honourable gentlemen know that in the constituencies of Halifax and Kent these additional staffs were put on again in December and maintained during the election campaign, and then immediately afterwards taken off? Do they know that there was a request some little time ago to put in an additional siding just outside of Halifax, about a mile and a half from an existing station, at a place where they had declined a number of times to put a station because there was no necessity for it? One week before the Halifax by-election a gang of men went down there and proceeded to put in the siding; and up to the 16th of January last

not a train had stopped there to pick up a passenger, nor had a car been put into the siding. That sort of thing ought to be condemned, and I am making mention of it in the hope that my remarks may come under the eye of the President of the Canadian National Railways.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I will see that he gets a copy of the honourable gentleman's speech.

Hon. Mr. BENNETT: But the election is over.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: But it will serve for the next one.

Hon. Sir JAMES LOUGHEED: Will you take the siding up?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I will consult with my colleagues from Nova Scotia.

Right Hon. Sir GEORGE E. FOSTER: Maybe that is an evidence of prosperity.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Some reference was made to the action of this House last Session in dealing with a certain Bill proposing certain branch lines which the Government desired to have built, and giving a blank cheque to the Government or the Minister of Railways to construct 1,011 miles of line at an estimated cost of \$28,000,000, or \$30,000 a mile. \$30,000 a mile was the cost of building the Transcontinental Railway in 1903, as estimated by the then and present Minister of Finance. The Transcontinental cost \$89,000 a mile, and was finished by 1911. It is obviously impossible to build railroads at this time on the estimated cost of 1903, or for one-third of the actual cost of building a railroad by the Government between 1903 and 1911. The Bill to which I have referred was in the hands of the Department of Railways more than three months before it was submitted to Parliament during the closing days of the Session. I think within a week of prorogation. This House wisely refused to be stampeded, and refused to put the Bill through in its existing form, realizing the tremendous consequences that would undoubtedly follow. We are informed in the Speech from the Throne that that Bill is to be re-introduced in its former shape. So far as I am concerned, Honourable gentlemen, I am in favour of the building of a number of those branch lines in Western Canada, but I am so unalterably opposed to the construction of certain other lines—lines which Governments for the last thirty years have refused to build, because they knew they could never begin to pay the cost of operation, and for