

Concluding the reading of the correspondence, Mr. Helmcken argued that by the bond therein set forth substantial guarantee had been secured, while the obligation rested upon the Province to wait upon the railway company until it could be learned what the Dominion Parliament would do at its next session. The correspondence he had read showed conclusively, distinctly and sufficiently that a contract had been entered into between the Government of British Columbia and Mackenzie & Mann, that that contract was a valid and binding one, and that there was no reason to believe that it would not be executed on the part of the firm named. Then why should the breach of faith contemplated in this present bill be perpetrated—a contract with a perfectly valid bond be terminated without the contractors being permitted to do as the contract explicitly set forth they should—go before the Dominion Parliament at its next session for a subsidy? There was no obligation upon the Province until the stipulated work had been duly performed by the company interested, nor was the treatment of the contractors now contemplated such as any man was entitled to receive at the hands of the Government of any province of Canada. The bill, he held, should not receive a second reading, but the members on both sides of the house should join in expressing their disapproval of it, involving as it did the most pernicious principle of repudiation, and containing no good point upon which to base a legitimate defence.

MR. BOOTH thought that after hearing the correspondence read by the senior member for Victoria the Finance Minister would have something to say in his own defence and defence of this measure. He could see no other inference to be drawn than that the correspondence referred to had been purposely withheld in order that this bill might be got through the house with the members in ignorance of the salient facts. He emphasized the fact that the companies assisted by the late government got not one dollar of public money until their several undertakings had been satisfactorily completed, and at a cost of many times the subsidies involved. If the present Government did not want roads built, why did not they come out openly and say so, instead of adopting their present dishonest methods of procedure, as illustrated in this withholding of correspondence. He strongly opposed government ownership of railways, as leading only to bankruptcy, and not to be thought of in comparison with the broad-minded policy of the late Government, so eminently practical and business-like and so fruitful in excellent results. As for the present bill, it was clearly repudiation in its worst form, and he would in consequence vote against it.

MR. M'BRIDE thought it his duty to condemn this legislation, which was for the purpose of impairing the commercial development of British Columbia. It was a bill apparently that was purely and entirely the work of the introducer, and had for its purpose the tearing down of all that had been done in years for the development of this country by men of long experience in the Province, and who had given their best thought as to the methods to be pursued in the promotion of its true interests. He denied that the members for Chilliwack, Westminster City and Lower Vancouver could justify to their constituents a vote for this bill, which he regarded as a monstrous one. He objected, too, that the legislation here presented had not been foreshadowed in the speech from the throne, and passed in turn upon the curious "mistakes" of the Attorney-General in so many of his important acts—evidence either that he exhibited grossest carelessness in the preparation of these measures or that there was something worse behind. The fact that the Government proposed no policy of development in substitution for these railways that they proposed to make an end of; the value of the railway promoter to the country; the silence of the Government members, and the unquestionable repudiation here involved. The action of the Government in going back upon the legislation of the past years and condemning the policy that had been proved for the advantage and the upbuilding of British Columbia would, he believed, be taken as the beginning of the end—the downfall of this present Government who would enunciate such a doctrine.

HON. MR. COTTON followed Mr. Deane in the debate on the second reading of the bill to repeal certain statutes granting aid to railways. He was received with Government cheers and Opposition counter cheers. He said he had not intended to say anything in the debate, because every honorable gentleman who considered the matter impartially must have seen that the explanations made by his honorable friend and colleague, the Attorney-General, were quite correct as to the wisdom and propriety of having introduced this bill. Honorable gentlemen on the other side of the house had expended a great deal of effort in piling up a mass of fiction, which could be broken down in about two minutes.