

Mr. REID: Now, Mr. Speaker, I have had the Intercolonial railway and the Prince Edward Island railway under the operation of the Department of Railways for a year or two, and while I believe the department did their very best to operate them as successfully as they could be operated under government control, yet I feel it is in the interest of the railways and of the public that these should be operated by an independent commission such as is being organized in connection with this Canadian National Railway system. I feel that it is also in the interest of the employees. I do not see how we can operate successfully if we continue the Intercolonial independent of the Canadian National Railway system. I am sorry the hon. member has moved the amendment, I do not think it is in the interest of any one concerned, and I hope the House will reject it.

Hon. F. B. CARVELL (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, before the vote is taken I feel it is incumbent upon me to say a word or two in as much as I am one of the ministers representing that portion of Canada traversed by the Intercolonial railway. This matter came up some months ago when the operation of the Intercolonial was transferred to the Canadian National railways by Order in Council, and it was done with my full knowledge and consent. I purpose to vote against the amendment of my hon. friend from Westmorland (Mr. Copp) and I shall do so not only with a clear conscience but with the feeling that the adoption of this amendment would really be going back to the old principle of operation of the Intercolonial as we had it in the past as long as I can remember.

There has been a great deal of discussion on this Bill regarding the virtues of public and private ownership, but for the life of me I fail to see wherein it was necessary to discuss the question at all. We have got the railways on our hands to-day—it is not a very rosy prospect I must confess—and it is the duty of Parliament and of the Government especially to try and see that they work out the problem in the best way possible. I repeat that I fail to see how the question whether or not a man is in favour of public ownership or of private ownership of a public utility is raised in connection with the Bill now before the House. We have the Canadian National Railway system on our hands, we have the Canadian Northern, we have the Grand Trunk Pacific, we have

[Mr. Power.]

the National Transcontinental, we have the Intercolonial; and it is the duty of the Government and of Parliament to devise the best possible method of making the operation of these roads a success. I am not going to hark back to what has taken place in connection with the operation and management of the Intercolonial Railway from its inception. It has been a political machine, pure and simple, and any man who stands up in this House and says that it has not been a political machine up to the last two years or so—well, he is simply talking to hear himself talk. If I thought that the Canadian National Railway system was going to be run as a political machine, as Government railways have been run in the past, I would vote and fight against the whole thing; I do not know what I would not do to prevent its going through. We have not received the service in the Maritime Provinces to which we have been entitled; and it has cost fifty per cent more money to give us the service we did get than it should have cost. In this respect one party has been just as bad as the other. Now, instead of fifteen or eighteen hundred miles of railway, as we had in the Intercolonial, we have about twelve thousand miles—and it looks as if we should have considerably over twenty thousand miles before very long. I tell you, Sir, that unless this system is run as a business proposition, Canada will be faced with a most serious problem; with something more serious even than the debt incurred by the war. Much, therefore, as I would like to see advantages given to my own part of Canada; much as I would like to see the Intercolonial Railway run for the benefit of the Maritime Provinces, I cannot as a public man agree to any proposal which will cause this or any other portion of the system to be operated as anything but a business proposition. The operation of these Government railways may not be perfect, but it will be under the control of a board of directors entirely independent of the Government, except that they are appointed by the Government. If ever a body of men had absolutely a free hand in the running of a railway, the board administering the Canadian National Railways have had a free hand up to the present time—I know what I am talking about. I can promise that so long as I remain in this Government there will be no question, so far as I know, about their having a free hand to run the National Railway system as a business proposition. Unless we do run