

These gentlemen are all exceedingly anxious that the canals should be opened at the earliest possible day; you cannot get them open too early to suit the people who are interested in canal transportation. But it has not been possible for me to name any particular date when the canals can be opened. That will depend entirely upon circumstances over which we have practically no control. Every year these gentlemen urge us most strongly to open the canals earlier than the preceding year. But we have to keep in mind some important considerations which are not present always in the mind of those gentlemen. We are required to make repairs in order that the canals may not break down during the season, that there may not be any complete block in the use of the canals during the season of navigation. We have got to be careful to avoid the possibility of that contingency occurring, and therefore we can only make those necessary repairs late in the close season, during the period between the close of one season and the opening of another season, and we have got to take the necessary time to make those repairs thoroughly. If we were to do otherwise, and neglect those repairs to meet the wishes of the board of trade and others interested in canal traffic, we would incur the very serious danger of having canal navigation absolutely blocked for a considerable period during the season. I am thoroughly convinced, and so are the officers of my department, of the importance of having the canals open as soon as possible, and every effort will be made to that end. That is all the assurance that I can give to the hon. gentleman, and all the assurance I have been able to give to the board of trade. I have not been able to say to them that on any particular day we can rely with confidence that the canal will be open.

RAILWAY POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT.

Mr. DAVIN. I should like to ask the Minister of Railways and Canals what is the railway policy of the Government, and in order to put myself right, I will conclude with a motion. I am in a state of bewilderment as to the policy of the Government in this respect. Last session the hon. gentleman laid down certain lines of railway policy, and I want to know whether that is the policy to-day. The words of the Minister of Railways and Canals in another place, to which I cannot refer, are still ringing in my ear, and in the ears of many hon. members. Now, I want to call the attention of the House to the policy as laid down here last session when the Minister of Railways and Canals was presenting his Crow's Nest Pass Railway Bill. This is what he said:

The supposition is but natural that the whole valley of Boundary Creek will be some time one continuous line of city life. Well, now, what does such an ultimate accomplishment depend

upon? Why, it depends solely upon there being transportation facilities afforded, and railway construction, and means by which people who are willing to go in and develop that country may get in supplies, and fuel, and carry the products of their mines out of the country. It only depends upon that, and it does seem to me a serious question whether it is not the duty of Parliament to lend every possible aid, without delay, in order that we may come into possession of this valuable territory. Because the committee must not lose sight of the fact that this important section of the country lies immediately adjacent to the boundary of the United States, it is not very far from an extensive trunk line of railway. It will not take many miles of railway to be laid down in order to penetrate into that Boundary Creek section. Now, the people on the southern side of the border are liable to do in respect of that boundary country what they have almost done in respect of the Kootenay district. They are liable, by building a section of railway into that country, to get possession of it from a business and a trade point of view, and they are liable to divert the trade away from our own country, from the east and from the coast, and carry it to the south of the line. To my own personal knowledge, they have been doing this with respect to Kootenay. Why, Mr. Chairman, it is a fact which only requires to be known, I think, to make a grave impression upon the minds of this House and of the public generally, that the people of the United States belonging to the state of Washington, appreciating the advantages of the possession of British Columbia and of the valuable minerals which are there undeveloped, built a railway up into the Kootenay country and got possession of the business and the trade of that country, and have built up the city of Spokane wholly cut of the business which has originated in the province of British Columbia. To-day the city of Spokane is a flourishing city of 35,000 people. You go into that city and get into conversation with business men and they will tell you that the business prosperity and growth of that place from a little village of seven or eight thousand inhabitants a few years ago has been due to the development which has taken place in British Columbia. These people were there and they took advantage of that trade. I say that it is a matter of considerable importance for the committee to discuss as to whether we will retain possession of this country from a business point of view, or whether we will let the people to the south of us take that trade from under our eyes and become possessed of it in the sense in which the conditions of business will tend to the transfer of that trade in that direction.

I have here been quoting the words of my hon. friend the Minister of Railways and Canals, who last year laid it down that it was a wrong thing to insert in the charter of a railway any clause limiting its powers. Well, I want to know what is the policy of the Government to-day. There is the policy stated last year on which millions of dollars were voted by this House, it was because of that policy that millions of dollars were voted for the Crow's Nest Pass Railway. Now I should like to hear from the Minister of Railways and Canals whether he adheres to these words of his last year, or whether he has changed his mind, for it is desirable that we should know what is the policy of