

to the company. But in relation to the other properties which belong to the Canadian National Railway Company, I think the time has come when a line should be drawn to differentiate the authority of the board and the authority of parliament in that respect. I am free to say it is a phase of the whole problem which has not yet been solved. In fact, no phase of it has been solved in the last two years and three months.

Mr. GRAHAM: There were many phases left to be solved by us.

Mr. MEIGHEN: There are two or three left, but the great mass of the railway problem of Canada, in my judgment, is solved so far as policy goes. There is no question that it should not be within the power of the Canadian National Railway directorate to dispose of large capital assets of that company without even the authority of the government, to say nothing of the authority of parliament. I am aware, as is the minister, that it has been done, involving very large amounts. I do not know what authority of the government was given, but I know that the authority of parliament was not sought. If this be continued we might wake up some morning to find that we had no national railways at all. It seems to me that the government owes it to the House to examine carefully the legislation in that regard and to make a recommendation to parliament as to policy. I do not make these remarks with any special reference to this line; I make them with respect to the general policy of the country's greatest asset.

Mr. GRAHAM: This question of the disposition of property was up last year, I think, in the form of a question or return, and at that time I had a good many particulars before me. But I wholly agree with the leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen) that as shareholders we should not dispose of our property without at least the Governor in Council giving his consent, under some amendment to the statute—either that or the authority of parliament being obtained. As my right hon. friend says, the problem is of such great magnitude that it is possible we might find some of our property disposed of which as a government or as parliament we would not think of selling. I have made a note of that and will have it looked into, and if necessary, bring down legislation this year to cover that point.

Mr. PREVOST (Translation): It is astonishing, Mr. Chairman, that the branch line, which is mentioned in this resolution,

[Mr. Meighen.]

has not been built before this. I confess that I have not a full knowledge of all the details regarding the various lines mentioned in the twenty-six resolutions that the Minister of Railways has submitted to this House. It is only right to await the explanations of the minister and the information which will be supplied by the members of this House who are familiar with the advantages, utility and even the necessity of these various branch lines.

You will allow me, Mr. Chairman, to make a few remarks on the line just referred to and upon which I can speak with some knowledge, as it is situated within the region in which I reside. The present resolution states: "that it is expedient to bring in a measure to provide for the construction of a branch line of the Canadian National Railway between Grande Fresnière and Rinfret Junction, in the province of Quebec." The estimated cost would be \$357,000.

Thirty miles to the north of Montreal, that is from St. Jerome—in the county of Terrebonne—at Arundel, in the county of Argen-teuil—a state railway—the Canadian National serves a very rich region of mountains, valleys and plateaus, a region, to say the least, delightful both as regards its picturesque aspect and its natural resources. A large and laborious population of settlers, farmers and trading people inhabit that district and numerous tourists, whose number is ever increasing, meet in this region. Unfortunately, between Montreal, the metropolis of Canada, and those beautiful parts, there is, in the government railway system, a solution of continuity. No direct communication exists by the government railways, between this region and Montreal. Nevertheless, the Canadian National Railway between Montreal and Ottawa, passes at a distance of only twelve miles to the south of its northern route, and it is the building of those twelve miles that we ask this House to authorize.

I shall not take advantage of the occasion to discuss the state ownership of railways, to consider whether the principle is good or bad, whether its application is beneficial or not. I shall neither take advantage of the occasion to try and establish that it is responsible for the financial conditions of our railways, which has so heavily burdened our national budget. I accept the situation as it exists. The government of Canada is the owner of railways of which some lines are continuously showing deficits, deficits that must be met by means of taxes levied on the people. Other lines are assets or may