

Mr. NEELY. About a month afterwards orders were given for the suspension of the work on this contract. It was with great consternation that the people of the west heard through the public press that one of the first official acts of the new Minister of Railways was to issue orders for the suspension of the work. It would appear that that hon. gentleman had not been reading the papers at the time that his leader made his tour through western Canada last summer, when he found very much fault with the late government because of the tardy way in which they were fulfilling their promise to build a railway to Hudson bay. I think the Prime Minister at one point went even so far as to state the exact length of time in which he could build the Hudson Bay railway if the people of Canada gave him the opportunity. I know that my opponent in the late election made the statement on platform after platform that if the Hon. Mr. Borden were returned to power at this election, we would have a railroad in operation to Hudson bay inside the term of four years; he stated that Mr. Borden had given him authority to make, or himself had made that statement. Now, that pledge undoubtedly helped to counteract to a very large extent in the minds of the western people the other announcement which the Prime Minister was so fond of making, that if made premier of Canada, he would not support reciprocity.

Therefore, I would ask the Prime Minister if he thinks the action of his colleague, the Minister of Railways (Mr. Cochrane) will enhance his reputation in western Canada as a fair dealer with the people, as a man who will keep his pledge and his word? Does he think the Minister of Railways in holding up this contract and practically holding back the work on the Hudson Bay railway, this great national undertaking, for a year, will receive the approval of the people of western Canada? Evidently my hon. friend the Minister of Railways (Mr. Cochrane) places considerable value on the spectacular and sensational in his entry into public life in the Dominion government. Something big had to be done to bring him before the public mind. He had not been a member of this House. There were members who for a number of years in their parliamentary life had devoted great attention to the study of the railway problems of this country, for instance the hon. member for Lanark (Mr. Haggart), the hon. member for South Simcoe (Mr. Lennox), and the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Lancaster). When the new government was being formed many people were surprised that the Prime Minister had to go beyond the ranks of his parliamentary followers to find a man suitable to fill the position of Minister of Railways in the new cabinet. Where did he go? He

Mr. SCHAFFNER.

went to the cabinet of Sir James Whitney, Premier of Ontario. Sir James has a reputation throughout Canada as being something of a dictator, and perhaps my hon. friend the Minister of Railways learned his lesson while he was a member of that government and came to the conclusion that he could make the greatest success of the administration of the Railway Department by adopting that policy of dictation, and so we have this order suspending work on the Hudson Bay railway as his first official act—I think the order was promulgated before the hon. gentleman even had a seat in this House. That order came as a very great shock to us in the west because it is daily becoming more evident to us that if there is one work urgently needed in western Canada it is the construction of this railway undertaken by the late government. It is known to everyone that the west to-day is suffering from the worst car shortage in its history. There is a large crop, a somewhat damaged crop, needing to be transported as soon as possible to the head of the lakes; it must be kept moving in order to prevent it from deteriorating. But we are confronted with this unprecedented car shortage. This car shortage in western Canada is surely the strongest argument in favour of this new outlet to the markets of the world. Yet although we have in this evidence that the existing railways are utterly unable to cope with the situation and that the new government are equally unable to cope with the situation, for I have not heard of their doing anything to relieve the car shortage, the first official act of the new Minister of Railways is to set back that great undertaking that must furnish a new outlet to the products of every farmer west of the Great Lakes.

Is there no such thing as sanctity of contract between governments and those with whom they contract to do business? Does the Minister of Railways not appreciate the fact that governments ought to have the same code of honour as exists between individuals? Yet here we have an instance where a contract is let on a great public work, a new government comes into office and immediately work under that contract is suspended. My information is that a considerable amount of material was being shipped in to the line of this railway, that a number of sub-contracts had been let, that these sub-contractors had men and material on the ground. Some of these men were there possibly a day or two or three days when the order came from Ottawa that all work under this contract must be suspended. You know that in that portion of the country through which the route of the proposed railway runs, the winter season is the especial season for the shipping in