

cal spirit, but I suggest that this is a matter into which inquiry might well be made and that an estimate—not necessarily exact, an approximate estimate—be made of the amount required by the several railways for this purpose. It would be the wiser and safer thing, before the Bill is through, to provide a reasonable limitation, so that there shall be no such thing as the "blank cheque" which has been spoken of.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: I shall be pleased to consider that matter when the Bill is introduced. I think it is worthy of consideration.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Before we vote this resolution, we are entitled to have a more detailed statement as to its application. A general and vague statement has been made, but we have not been furnished with details.

Mr. J. D. REID: This afternoon I gave a detailed statement of the \$32,966,515 worth of equipment that has been ordered. I gave the details in respect of each company.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: In what proportion is this amount divided among the different companies—the Intercolonial, the Canadian Northern, the Grand Trunk, and the Grand Trunk Pacific?

Mr. J. D. REID: There will be a small amount for the Canadian Government railway system, which, of course, includes the National Transcontinental between Winnipeg and Moncton, as well as the Intercolonial.

Mr. JOSEPH READ: And the Prince Edward Island railway.

Mr. J. D. REID: Yes. The largest portion of it, however, is for the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk. Seventy-five of the engines ordered are for the Grand Trunk railway system; \$4,500,000 is being expended in engines alone. Last year we purchased 100 or 150 engines, and the Grand Trunk got 45 or 47 of them, so that we are really providing equipment for the Grand Trunk system. An hon. member a few moments ago said that I should make a statement with regard to this matter. It has been the custom of the Minister of Railways to make a statement when he brings down his estimates, and I intend to do that so far as this railway question is concerned. The same hon. gentleman said that the railways of Canada were not in a very good shape in the matter of operation. Taking everything into consideration, I think

[Mr. Fielding.]

that the standard of the operation of the railways of Canada during the last winter was equal to, if not better than, that of any other country.

Mr. JOSEPH READ: Except Prince Edward Island.

Mr. J. D. REID: I will tell you why I believe they were well operated. The equipment that we purchased a year ago gave great assistance during last winter, which was a very severe one. In the month of October last the presidents of the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern, Grand Trunk and New York Central railway systems met in Montreal and formed an organization known as the national railway defence association. They practically agreed to operate the several railway systems of Canada as one. They have since formed a sub-committee of the several railways; the members of that committee have been meeting every week and have been operating the railways practically as one system. In other words, if one railway gets into trouble the railway which is in the best position to do so comes to its assistance and runs trains over its lines. The members of that association are entitled to the greatest credit for the splendid assistance they have rendered during the last winter. I am in communication with that association every day; its secretary has sent me the minutes of its meetings and has kept me advised of everything it has been doing. I have a full report, if it is of any interest to the members of this House, of all that the association has done from the time of its organization up to the present day.

Mr. GAUTHIER: Has that association reported to the minister, in his official capacity as Minister of Railways and Canals, that many engines, on account of not having been overhauled, have been lying idle at junction points? And has the Government been requested to supply skilled labour to overhaul those engines?

Mr. J. D. REID: I never heard of any such complaint until the hon. member mentioned it to me this evening, but, since that organization was formed, when I received a complaint of any kind I immediately communicated it to Mr. W. M. Neal, secretary of the organization, and it did not matter whether that complaint was in regard to shortage of cars or trouble at any point, I always received an immediate reply and assistance was at once forthcoming, or the matter in regard to which the complaint was made was taken up by the association and promptly dealt with.