

share to that deficit. But you cannot expect anything but a deficit on the Prince Edward Island railway so long as it continues in its present position. It is in a state of transition; it is being changed from a narrow gauge to a broad gauge system. Fully fifty per cent of the freight originating in Prince Edward Island to-day has to be transferred at three different points from narrow gauge to broad gauge cars, involving heavy expense to the railway. Now, Sir, while the railway is in that condition it is hardly fair to give the deficit as a reason for taking no action. In order to have a railway run properly; in order that its earnings may reach the maximum at a minimum of expense, it must be put in proper shape so that traffic may be moved with all possible speed.

This work, as I say, was begun in 1913. It has been continued piece by piece until 60 miles have been standardized out of a total of 277. The minister said that the work was stopped on account of financial conditions. He also told us in March that the policy of the Government was that lines which were begun prior to 1914 were to be finished before new work was undertaken. In view of the fact that the minister is preparing to lay several hundred miles of new steel in the West and in other parts of Canada during the present year, I can properly submit that the Government should have continued the broadening of the gauge of the Prince Edward Island railway this year. The minister should, I think, reconsider the statement he made on the 30th of March, and place in the Supplementary Estimates an appropriation for an amount sufficient at least to carry out part of the work of broadening the gauge of the Prince Edward Island railway.

The member for King's (Mr. McIsaac) dealt very eloquently with the transportation problem in Prince Edward Island and I do not like to disagree with him in that regard. But when he says that he is satisfied that the minister has been fully seized with the importance of this work, I can hardly say that I experience the satisfaction which my hon. friend seems to enjoy, because if the minister were fully seized of the importance of the matter which we are pressing upon him he would have placed in the Estimates a sufficient appropriation to continue the work, or would have used his influence with the management of the railway to have the work brought nearer to completion during the present year. I am not going to take

an extreme attitude in the matter; I am not going to say that the work should all be done this year. But it could easily be done within two years, having regard to the needs of traffic in the meantime.

It is urged that the financial conditions are not such as to justify the continuance of this work during the present year. But let me point out that the present condition of the roadbed is not such as to necessitate a very large expenditure in widening the gauge. All the new ties put in since 1913 have been of the broad gauge type. The roadbed is in proper condition for the spreading of the rails. That is not a very expensive operation; if it is necessary to put down heavier rails that can be done. Rails are available for new work in other parts of Canada; surely the minister can find rails to continue work that was begun in Prince Edward Island six years ago. I think I have described to the committee the condition that exists in that province and the necessity for having it remedied at the earliest possible moment.

About six weeks ago a petition was presented to the minister by the board of trade of the city of Charlottetown and representatives of the business men of Prince Edward Island asking that this work be continued and that provision be made for a second car ferry boat. I would like to know from the minister what consideration has been given to that petition, which has been presented to the general manager of the Canadian National Railway Board as well as to the minister.

I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, that I cannot join with my hon. friend (Mr. McIsaac) in advocating the Georgetown-Pictou route for a car-ferry service. When I was a school-boy I learned the couplet:

One thing at a time, and that done well,  
Is a very good rule, as many can tell.

If the people of Prince Edward Island get the benefit of proper operation of the service which we already have, and of standardization of the railway, I think the needs of the present year will be pretty well served. I join with my hon. friend, however, in his very happy reference to the good horses and the good men that have been produced in Prince Edward Island. He made a grave omission, though, when he neglected to mention the women; for I think we have the best women in Prince Edward Island that can be found anywhere. The success of the efforts made by that province during the Great War was largely due to the work of our women.