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House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—SIXTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH OF HON. EDWARD BLAKE, M.P.,

ON THE

GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY BILL.

FRIDAY, 11TH APRIL, 1890.

Mr. BLAKE. I think, in so far as my memory serves me, the extract which the hon. gentleman read, correctly states the effect of the law, and there is on the Statute-book a provision, inserted during a somewhat animated discussion which took place here, which would prevent amalgamation or working arrangements between the two great corporations of which the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Mitchell) has spoken. It is not, therefore, with respect to that difficulty that anything I have to say is brought forward. If that question were raised, I agree with the hon. member that it would be a vital question, a question which certainly could not be disposed of, under any proper reading of our rules, without a proper notice and without a reference back to the Committee. But a suggestion which the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Mitchell) has made, may, perhaps, solve the immediate difficulty, and enable us to deal with this measure upon what I conceive to be sound principles. I feel, perhaps, a special responsibility with respect to the present position of this Bill, because it happens that, upon looking over the earlier measure to which the hon. gentleman has alluded, it appeared to me, as then framed, objectionable. It seemed to me that the Parliament of Canada ought to lay down this rule: that it would not grant the power of amalgamation or working arrangements without having passed once, at all events, upon the proposition that it was expedient that such powers should be given. And, therefore, I suggested to those who were promoting the other Bill, that they should alter the Bill and limit their powers to cases in which

the Parliament of Canada had once spoken affirmatively. I said, if Parliament has given to any railway company either a general authority to make working arrangements with any other company, or a special authority to make working arrangements with a particular railway company, then there is no objection to Parliament saying to another company: You can make working arrangements with any company so authorised; because Parliament in that case has already said there is no objection to such an amalgamation being effected. And it was upon that suggestion as to the expediency, on general principles, of retaining the power to the Parliament of Canada, to that extent, that the other Bill was altered, with, I believe, the unanimous consent of the Railway Committee. It seems to me the principle is as good and sound to-day, and with respect to this Bill, as it was with respect to the other Bill, and, therefore, I object, upon the same grounds on which I objected to the other Bill comprehending that wide authority, to this Bill comprehending as wide an authority as the hon. gentleman proposes. If there be, as the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Mitchell) has said, some specific case, which it is wanted to meet in a hurry this Session, for the amalgamation or the making of working arrangements with some particular railway, we can still preserve the general principle, which I deem to be of importance, by allowing the general clause to be retained in its revised form, and by inserting a clause giving special authority to deal with the specified company, as the hon. gentleman has suggested, and thus we shall have met the case fully.

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