

will be charged the party in whose name the building was purchased will have to be absorbed.

Mr. STEVENS: That is only one of my questions.

Mr. GRAHAM: My hon. friend puts his questions so delicately that one would almost imagine he was innocent.

Mr. STEVENS: So I am.

Mr. GRAHAM: But if I answered the delicate question he asks, he would have all the information which I am bound in honour not to divulge.

Mr. STEVENS: That is just what we want. Will the minister give the reasons why he cannot answer the question?

Mr. GRAHAM: If I gave the reasons I should simply be answering the question.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: No.

Mr. GRAHAM: My hon. friend is not so innocent as the Minister of Finance.

Mr. FIELDING: The ex-Minister.

Mr. GRAHAM: The ex-Minister, I mean; the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) is innocent.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Do not believe him.

Mr. GRAHAM: When my hon. friend says: I do not ask that you give me the agreement, but I want you to tell me what your reasons are for not being able to give it to me.—when he says that, he is simply asking in a subtle way for the information which he knows I cannot give him. If I

10 p.m. stated the reasons it would only be answering the entire question, and my hon. friend knows that. There are reasons which I believe, and which the Canadian National Company believes, are valid why, in the public interest, the information should not be divulged at the present time. But parliament will be entitled to all the information when the transaction is completed.

An hon. MEMBER: When it is too late.

Mr. STEVENS: Surely the minister cannot be serious in taking that stand.

Mr. GRAHAM: He is.

Mr. STEVENS: Then I suppose I must accept his answer. In that event I think we are justified in expressing an opinion in the absence of definite information.

Mr. GRAHAM: Surely.

[Mr. Graham.]

Mr. STEVENS: I think I have already suggested that Sir Henry Thornton, as the head of the National Railways, stepped beyond his reasonable authority and exceeded his rights in committing the Canadian people to an expenditure—committing them, I repeat, to an expenditure—of \$2,000,000 without placing in the hands of the minister, to be placed before parliament, one word of the agreement upon which such advance was made. In the second place I say that if Sir Henry Thornton's conception of his duty as president of this great system is that he is justified in placing \$2,000,000 in the hands of an employee of the Canadian National Railways in Paris to purchase a hotel for a syndicate in New York, then again I say Sir Henry Thornton's idea of his duties is such as will not increase my confidence in him. It is beyond me to understand that a transaction of this magnitude—not the purchase of a private car or some little matter of that kind involving a few thousand dollars, but the purchase of a central site in Paris—was entered into and the money deposited in the bank without informing the minister, that such a step was being taken. To me it is inconceivable that a man of the standing of Sir Henry Thornton should take such a position unless he has got an altogether distorted idea of his importance and his position in this country as head of the National Railways. That is my opinion, and in the absence of definite information from the minister I think I am justified in expressing that opinion in stronger terms than perhaps would be necessary if we had all the information before the committee.

I intimated a little while ago, and I repeat it now, that it would appear to me that after a test of public opinion was made by the rather flamboyant announcement—characteristic of the gentleman's attitude since he has had this exalted position—that he, Sir Henry Thornton, had bought a hotel in Paris, which was blazoned all over the country, and the reflection of an adverse public opinion through the press and other mediums, that as a result this syndicate is a second thought, is only now being arranged, and is not a bona fide syndicate capable of carrying through this transaction. That is my candid opinion, and again I say I am justified in expressing that opinion in the absence of one iota of evidence that these gentlemen are competent, both so far as business ability and financial responsibility are concerned, to carry through a \$2,000,000 purchase. If the Canadian National Railways desire to improve their position on the Continent, they could very well be satisfied with ordinary rented quar-