

METHOD OF BUILDING.

Having clearly shown the almost universal desire for the immediate construction of an additional line, and described the steps taken by the Government to respond to this demand from the public, the question arises, did the Government adopt the best method of constructing the road? The Opposition say: Better have a Government-owned railway than a railway-owned Government. This, of course, is a mere flippancy. There is not a Government-owned railway either in Great Britain or in the United States, and only one in Canada. Conservative leaders in Canada have refused to adopt the principle. Sir John Macdonald always strongly protested against it, and as late as the year 1897, Sir Charles Tupper vehemently opposed the idea of a Government-owned railway. Sir Mackenzie Bowell visited Australia some years ago, and there saw the operation of Government-owned railways, and he has quite recently expressed his strong and well-settled convictions against the project of Government ownership and operation. Hon. John Haggart, who was Minister of Railways and Canals, and is the Opposition's railway expert has all through his public career freely expressed his hostility to the Government going into the railway business.

A still better authority, perhaps, than any of these, Sir George A. Drummond, a member of the Senate of Canada, President of the Canadian Sugar Refining Company, Vice-President of the Bank of Montreal, ex-President of the Montreal Board of Trade, and one of the shrewdest business men in Canada, a Conservative, could not remain quiet under a proposal to extend the Government railway across the continent. He said:

I am dead opposed to it, especially after the object-lesson the Intercolonial Railway has been to the country. That is why I am absolutely opposed to the Government owning and controlling railways. They might possibly own the railways without running them, but that is another question. Government ownership might be tolerable if they could have the railways run by an absolutely independent commission, but that is almost an impossibility. It would be almost impossible to keep them in a non-partisan position, and very difficult even if they owned the roads and leased them.

I distinctly prefer the company system of owning and management on the ground that it is certain to secure better service and greater economy. No Government can or ever will run any business which is dependent upon votes, upon business principles. I am opposed to municipal ownership of commercial undertakings on the same ground.

The farther Dominion and municipal politics are kept away from business the better, because politics and business are an impossible combination. I repeat, it is impossible for institutions based upon and supported by the votes of the people to manage a business enterprise on commercial principles.

Mr. H. A. Powell, ex-M.P. of Sackville, New Brunswick, one of the Conservative leaders of that Province, and Conservative member of Parliament for Westmoreland up to 1900, is so opposed to the principle of Government ownership and operation of railways, that he prepared an address on the subject, and delivered it publicly.

If Mr. R. L. Borden has not on this question the sympathy of Conservatives like Sir Mackenzie Bowell, Sir Charles Tupper, Sir George A. Drummond, and Mr. Powell, it is obvious that if he was in power to-morrow he could not carry