

railways by companies or by the Government. Many people in the Maritime Provinces are in favour of government ownership. I have always defended the system of government ownership and operation, and more particularly in the Maritime Provinces. It may be that Government ownership does not always mean proper operation, as my hon. friend from Victoria, N.B., has said, but government ownership is not necessarily bad in itself. Bad government operation may be attributable to the Administration in power for the time being. As I have often expressed my desire to see further government control of railways, I feel that I must express my opinion on this question, so that my attitude may not be misrepresented before my constituents. I have, on many an occasion, claimed that I should like to see government control of railways extended further west, and extended, more particularly, on one transcontinental road from coast to coast. It was with that object in view that I supported the measure of the right hon. leader of the Opposition, when, in 1903, he proposed the construction, under Government control, of the Transcontinental as far as Winnipeg, in the hope that, in a short time, it would be extended practically to the Pacific coast. It has been said, and repeated very often, that the deficits on the Intercolonial have been accumulating for a number of years. We must always take into consideration the fact that, in the operation of a railway in every portion of a large country, we must be prepared to look for a deficit at the beginning of its operation. Those deficits on the Intercolonial were the result of the effort to connect the maritime ports with the producing territory of the West, and it has certainly been to the advantage of the West.

It was predicted by the great Canadian engineer, Sir Sandford Fleming, that, owing to the vast extent of territory which the railway would have to cover, it would not pay for a certain length of time, but the results which would accrue to the Dominion at large would be worth the expenditure by the country, and, if necessary, the assuming of deficits for a number of years. It was so thoroughly understood at the time that the road was a necessity that, when it was known at Confederation that, if its construction were not decided upon, there would be no Confederation. Mr. George Brown said, when the agreement was reached, that the people of Ontario would have built it themselves in order to secure

[Mr. Turgeon.]

the advantage of Atlantic ports. The first consideration, therefore, in the beginning of a railway is not as to whether or not it will pay; we must take into consideration what the future results will be.

There is no doubt that the Canadian Northern railway is one of the pioneer roads of the West, into many parts of which it has brought civilization and prosperity in its train. It must not be looked upon as a mere sink-hole; it has had a duty to perform. While I have often advocated the extension of Government control or ownership, I have always contended that this should be done with care and prudence, as the development and financial conditions of the country may permit. The Canadian Northern Railway Company have come before this House on many occasions. The Minister of Finance takes pleasure in recalling that it is a legacy which has been given to this Government by a former Administration, and that the difficulties which now confront him are due to what has been done by the preceding Government. One of the chief reasons for the financial difficulties of the Canadian Northern is its extension from Edmonton to the Pacific coast when we had scarcely finished the extension of the Grand Trunk Pacific from that city also through to the Pacific coast. That was the most expensive portion of the road to be constructed, and it practically paralleled the Grand Trunk Pacific. It was represented by the leader of the Opposition and by the hon. member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver) that one transcontinental in that portion of the West was sufficient for many years, and had it not been for the grant given by the Minister of Finance at the time the Canadian Northern would not have been in the bad condition in which it is to-day.

It may be claimed that we should at once give the Canadian Northern people everything they want. In 1914 they came, as they stated, for the last time, requesting a guarantee of \$45,000,000 in order that they might put themselves in a position to operate their road to the entire satisfaction of the people of Canada and of the financial men behind them. That guarantee was given to them under an agreement, by virtue of which should the Canadian Northern make default in the future, all that the Government had to do was to take over the road. The Canadian Northern put themselves into the hands of the Government and Parliament of Canada in the same way as a mortgagor in any part of the