

it was before the House of Commons at the time it was made, and exception was not taken to it then. I shall not enter into any argument over what may have taken place since, but I submit that so far as I know the situation, that was the relationship of the government of the day to Sir Henry Thornton and the railways under his management. The minister himself I think has said that, so far as politics are concerned, the kind of thing to which he had reference and which we all had in mind was not so much the possible influence of the ministry of the day or of members of parliament upon the trustees as it was the kind of influence that may be brought to bear from different sections of the country, a sectional influence that may be very real at times. That kind of influence upon the trustees is not going to be in any way affected by the manner in which this particular clause is framed. The trustees will do their duty according to their lights; making them removable for cause is only a just and fair way of proceeding, and if there is cause there should be freedom on the part of the ministry to remove them. Whether there may be cause or not, there should not be in the statute an implied reflection that the ministry of the day will do other than what is honourable in the circumstances in which they may be called upon to act.

Mr. BENNETT: I wish the committee would calmly consider this matter from another angle. I quite appreciate all that has been said, but the effort to secure good men for this position has already commenced. I know exactly what the former government had to contend with at the time they secured the services of Sir Henry Thornton. I think it is only fair to say this; the whole affair is past and gone; the gentleman himself is now no more. I came back from England and I left for the then Prime Minister, who was at the time out of town, a memorandum stating that I had been interviewed by two or three gentlemen who had spoken in the highest terms of Sir Henry Thornton's railroad experience; I thought he was admirably qualified by reason of his experience to undertake the task. I left that memorandum at the office of the Prime Minister at the time I returned from England. I was not then in the House of Commons. If we are to secure the kind of trustees that I believe are essential—and I cannot say how seriously I regard the matter; I cannot overstate the seriousness of it to the country—we must get men who will not think that by accepting office they are "conscripted," which I think

is the word used by the hon. member for Quebec East. If we have to conscript them, we cannot hope that men are going to take these positions who will be subject to, shall I say, the ill treatment of any government, even the government that appoints them. The leader of the opposition says that I suggest governments will not do thus and so. I know, for instance, that the international joint commission was originally appointed by the king in council. The appointment had not been completed when Sir Robert Borden came into office, and therefore the positions were filled by three Conservatives: Mr. Powell, Mr. Casgrain and Mr. Magrath.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Sir William Hearst.

Mr. BENNETT: No, I am referring to the first ones. Then the government of my right hon. friend had the matter amended so that the governor in council could appoint them.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Any government.

Mr. BENNETT: I mean the government in Canada—I want to remove it from any possible chance—and the pressure upon the right hon. gentleman was very great, as I happen to know. Now under those circumstances, knowing as I do and as every hon. member knows, just what the feeling is in a young country like Canada where you have not a great reservoir to draw upon such as you have in an older country, of skilled and trained men, we face this situation, that if we ask men to take one of these positions they are going to refuse unless they know that they are not going to be kicked about like men holding such offices too often are. When we say that good cause must be assigned for their removal or dismissal I am glad to hear the right hon. gentleman say that he thinks that is fair.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I agree with that entirely.

Mr. BENNETT: We say just what a board of directors would say. The House of Commons and the Senate, not simply the House of Commons, but both houses of parliament, represent the shareholders, if you will, and we say that no government weak with the frailties of political life, at least, shall be in a position either from mere caprice or what they believe to be good cause to make these men walk out. The approval of parliament must be given. If the approval of parliament is given the government is vindicated.