

corporate ownership, for the people, in the interests of the people, for the profit of the people, ownership of all franchises, whether they relate to telegraphs, telephone communication, water, light and all these other various things that are controlled largely by companies at present; and above everything else that the government of the country should control the railway systems, at least that this government should build, own and administer a great railway for the benefit of the people in such a manner that if a profit can be made out of it that profit shall accrue to the people. This country can now undertake such a great work at a time when our credit is so good—and we may favourably contrast the attitude of the present opposition on the subject of Canada's credit with the attitude of the Liberal opposition when the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built. No man on this side of the House has done anything in any way to discredit Canada either at home or abroad; no man has written a line that would injure the credit of Canada, no man has spoken a word that would reduce the good standing of this country in the money markets of the world. We have faith in Canada, as much faith as anybody else or any other party. But that is no reason why there should be this irresistible haste for the construction of this road. That is no reason for plunging the country into the waste which must result from going into a scheme like this without any adequate knowledge. That has been well pointed out by Mr. Blair, the government expert, that gentleman who is credited by the government. We have nothing to say against him. He is a man who, from his experience, from his intelligence, from his attention to these matters, is capable of giving an intelligent judgment on a matter of this sort, and he points out very well that this scheme is one that might end in dire disaster to this country; and if it does, if it goes to that point, the present generation will not live to see us rid of the results. It will hang like a cloud on the prospects of this country for two or more generations to come. The government should give further consideration to this scheme, they should get more accurate knowledge of the territory through which it is proposed to build this road, and they should not attempt to build faster than the absolute requirements of the country will warrant them. We must not lose sight of the fact that we have an immense area of country fit for settlement that is already supplied with railways, and in which there are yet only scanty settlements. These areas ought to be filled up before other large areas are attempted to be opened, areas of which little is known and where settlers may be encouraged to go in only to meet with disaster. If this scheme has the result of settling up sections of this country which are not fit for settlement, it will militate against not only that region itself but

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against Canada as a whole, and will be used by our neighbours across the line to our detriment. We ought first to direct our attention to bringing in settlers for the lands already fit for settlement, instead of making dangerous experiments and bringing settlers into a country half way between here and the North Pole, a country we know practically nothing about. I hope this policy will appeal to the good sense of the government, because I give them credit with having some good sense if they would only use it, and that they will pause before plunging Canada into such an enormous expenditure on such very scanty information as they possess at present.

Mr. W. H. BENNETT (East Simcoe). It is not often the House evinces such a disposition to listen to a debate, and under these circumstances I think I would be unwise not to avail myself of the opportunity presented. Perhaps even at the risk of wearying the House in the course of the next two hours, I may refer to some of the circumstances connected with this arrangement. I think the mercantile part of the community were rather startled last year when a number of gentlemen asked, as a businesslike proposition that certain rights and privileges might be granted to them, and were refused. No person expressed a great deal of astonishment when they saw appearing in the 'Canada Gazette,' the ordinary vehicle of information of that kind, a public notice that the parliament of Canada would be asked to charter a railroad upon certain terms and conditions. Now what were the terms and conditions mentioned by these gentlemen? First there was the proposition that this railway be constructed in Canada, that there should be certain commencement points and certain ending points. The commencement point showed the enterprise was looked upon as a business proposition, because I think it is clear that the Grand Trunk Company and the Grand Trunk Pacific, which for the purposes of the whole matter may be treated as one, were well know to act in unison. It was a notorious fact to any person conversant with railway life in Canada that the Grand Trunk Company had a splendid equipped railway system extending over the whole province of Ontario, in its eastern parts and its western parts, and northwards as far as North Bay. Therefore, when the Grand Trunk and the Grand Trunk Pacific Companies joined forces asking that their system might be connected at North Bay and continued to the west, no one professed any surprise. But when parliament did meet, much, I have no doubt, to the consternation of the Grand Trunk Pacific people and to the disgust of the people of Canada, there were these gentlemen held up by a lot of politicians, a great many of whom had some axes to grind, and the result has been that the country is face to face with a political