

*The Address—Mr. Meighen*

experience in parliament. One session alone has the hon. member for Brandon served; but that session was long enough to enable him to impress most favourably hon. members of this House of all parties. I believe it can be said that his sincerity of belief, as well as his fairness of discussion, made a marked impression upon hon. members generally. I do not know that I look, myself, for any less evidence of Liberal affiliation than I looked for in his predecessor; but I do believe that the hon. member from Brandon approaches all problems from the entire, wide Canadian standpoint. I believe further that his heart is not only truly Canadian, but just as truly British.

Very few words of mine are necessary at this stage of the work of parliament. This is our second session. The Speech from the Throne is down, and it covers a range of subjects. I cannot say there is to be found within its paragraphs very much difficult of digestion, very much of weight or importance to command the attention of hon. members this session. Some things are there that appeared a year ago. There are promises repeated, promises made in the fervour of new-found power twelve months ago, promises never yet fulfilled, but which they do not hesitate to come back and reiterate, undertaking to do better in 1923.

Last year we found in the Speech from the Throne a commitment on a railway policy, a policy which, it is true, they had one and all declared themselves opposed to in order, in eastern Canada, to attain the reins of power, but to which, in the Speech from the Throne, they pledged themselves to give effect, namely, to continue the public operation, through a board of directors, of the National Railway systems of this country, specifically promising, as well, what was the declared and admitted policy of the previous administration, to bring what were then two great systems into one by what they described as co-ordination. Later in the session, when the railways were under discussion at the hands of the late lamented minister, that hon. gentleman further proclaimed that that co-ordination was about to take place, that there was to be such a unification—a word also used in the former Speech from the Throne—as would enable economies to be effected and the greatest efficiency to be brought about. This time those words are somewhat modified in their reaffirmation in the present Speech from the Throne. Instead of assuring parliament, as was done a year ago when this long-delayed amalgamation or co-ordination of the Grand Trunk with the National system was to take place, the Speech

[Mr. Meighen.]

from the Throne to-day,—its author evidently feeling somewhat ashamed that that undertaking has never yet been carried out—makes no reference to the Grand Trunk system at all, but solemnly assures the people of Canada that the National system is to be co-ordinated, to be unified. Why, that co-ordination, that unification was all complete when hon. gentlemen opposite came into power. It had been done. The roads, apart from the Grand Trunk, were all being operated under one board.

Mr. GRAHAM: The Grand Trunk had a separate board.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Certainly; I did not say the Grand Trunk. I said that the other roads were all being operated under one board, with all the advantages of unification. And all that the Speech from the Throne to-day pretends to say is that what was already done a year ago is still going to be done. No reference at all is made to the Grand Trunk. Now, the practical consideration for this House on railway subjects is this: Why is it that the amalgamation of the Grand Trunk with the National Railways is not yet a fact? Why is it that no progress whatever has been made in twelve months, and that we have had nothing but promise after promise, non-fulfilment after non-fulfilment, and now not even a promise? Why is it that to-day we have two railway systems owned by the country, operated, I know, nominally under a single board, but which are each run as a separate system, just the same as they were run under private management? We have a separate traffic manager for the Grand Trunk as well as a separate passenger manager. There is a whole separate organization for the Grand Trunk, including a separate freight department and all the rest, involving all the burden of duplication. And the Speech from the Throne to-day even suppresses the hope that the government purpose to do away with that unnecessary expense to this country. Now, I am quite aware that certain preliminary steps had to be taken, that probably some arrangement would be required to be made as regards the holders of bonds of certain of the individual systems. But I have not learned that any steps have been taken to make these arrangements, or that any progress has been made. All that has been done in connection with this entire policy has been to oust from office a board of directors and a manager who, on the admission of the Minister of Railways who sat in this House last session, had succeeded in a singular way in achieving great progress in connection with the