been carefully prepared and was handed out by the Government for publication with a view to exploiting to the full the alleged "scandal" before a word could be quoted from the report itself or evidence advanced in rebuttal.

The Commissioners' Findings.

For popular effect the Commission has summed up its findings in a general phrase setting forth that some $40,000,000 might have been saved if the work of construction had been differently carried on. Of this arbitrarily fixed amount some $15,000,000 is accounted for in the report by the fact that steel bridges were built instead of wooden trestles, that uniformly low grades were adhered to instead of allowing momentum grades and that easy curves were insisted upon instead of sharp curves. In other words, the commissioners find that if a road of a lower standard of construction had been built, it would have cost $15,000,000 less from these considerations alone. If that money was wasted, the waste was deliberate and in pursuance of the settled policy endorsed by Parliament and by the Canadian people. Every successful railway in America is now spending millions upon the elimination of momentum grades, sharp curves and wooden trestles. The Laurier Government and the National Transcontinental commissioners believed that the money spent in this work at the outset would be saved ten times over in the reducton of operating cost.

Cumulative evidence discrediting the specific charges alleged by the Commissioners has piled up ever since the report was tabled. Already the Government has actually been compelled to deny the truth of at least one of the most serious allegations made. The synopsized report of the findings as handed out by the Government made the commissioners say that some $740,000 of a "rake off" had been handed over by the former National Transcontinental commissioners to M.P. and J. T. Davis, as the latter's share of the profit of two large contracts sub-let to O'Brien, Fowler and McDougall. A few days afterwards in the Commons, the acting Minister of Railways declared that no such sum had been handed over by the commission to the Messrs. Davis. If that amount were paid at all, which is not shown, it was paid by the subcontractors under their agreement with the main contractors and was in accordance with the usual practice whereby the main contractors were allowed a 10 per cent. margin on contract price in cases of sub-letting.

In this connection it may also be noted that of the alleged "waste", another arbitrarily fixed aggregate sum of $8,000,000 is said to have been due to profits obtained by contractors from the procedure followed in letting out contracts for large stretches of line in one block, and then allowing the main contractors to sublet to other contractors for small sections. Apart from the fact that the regular practice in railway construction is to hand the whole work over to a few main contractors, the Borden Government itself has admitted that this very practice, condemned in connection with the National Transcontinental Railway, is now in operation in connection with the Hudson's Bay Railway, in connection with the Welland Canal, in connection with works at Courteney Bay, St. John, and on other large Government undertakings.

In the Courteney Bay contract, involving the expenditure of many millions, the main contractor, Norton Griffiths, was awarded by the Government a price of $2.50 per cubic yard for solid rock excavation. That contract he sub-let to the Courteney Construction Company for $1.17 per cubic yard. This happened under the present Government, and almost under the very noses of Messrs. Gutelius and Lynch-Staunton. Here is a case where a main contractor made a profit of over 100 per cent. by sub-letting. Yet in the case of the National Transcontinental it is declared to be a crime for the main contractors to make an alleged profit of 10 per cent by sub-letting.

Private versus Public Interests.

But to get the true perspective of the Lynch Staunton-Gutelius report, it is necessary to go away back of the immediate findings and to see the report in the light of the larger ulterior motive which it is believed by many it is intended to serve. The report has two main aspects. The one centres around the allegation of $40 000,000 "waste" in the construction of the road. The other around an implied charge that the road can never be operated profitably and should not have been undertaken. This aspect is by far the more important and must eventually loom largest in public consideration.

The people of Canada irrespective of their political prejudices have too much common sense and are too vitally interested in the biggest national undertaking of decades to allow the interests either of rival railway corporations or of political opportunists to vitiate or nullify the real object of the National Transcontinental Railway. That object was to build, under Government control as to rates, which would effect competitive lines, a road of the highest class, in order amongst other things to efficiently and cheaply transport the products of the West by an all-Canadian route to the sea. The object was also to roll back the map of Canada four hundred miles and develop the great agricultural, mineral and forest resources of the Canadian hinterland. The undertaking, with these two ends in view, was twice endorsed at general elections by the people of Canada once in 1904, and again in 1908.

The report of the Government's investigating commissioners loses sight almost entirely of these main objects of the road. Disregarding the decision as to policy adopted by Parliament and by the people of Canada and adhered to by the Commission which carried out the work of constructon, the report seeks in the first place to make political capital for the Conservative party by charging gross waste in the construction of the road from Moncton to Winnipeg, but it also seeks the less apparent though more sinster object, of the damning of the whole road as a national undertaking. If in this object the commissioners aided and abetted by the Borden Government should be successful, a death blow would be dealt to the public ownership of railways in Canada, and the three transcontinental systems will have been practically invited to divide among themselves the control on their existing lines of the whole railway business of the Dominion.

After the smoke of party controversy has cleared away and the basic facts are grasped by the public, the real issue will be seen to be the question of permanent policy in regard to public ownership of the Transcontinental, and its construction as a road of the highest standard, maintained with a view to regulating rates on behalf of the public, as against the interests of rival railway corporations and monopolies.