

portance, and that this House should have an answer to the question.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). Mr. Speaker, I may say to my hon. friend (Mr. Montague) that I do not view this question at all in the light in which he views it. It is not a question that the government, as a government, have anything to do with. It is simply a question of the private Bill, of a private company for the construction of a railway. We have dozens of applications every session of this character. The only new feature that is introduced into this Bill is that the provision is incorporated in it, that the government, at some future time, if they choose, may acquire the charter and all that depends upon it. If there were here a question as to the ownership of railways by the government, or even the introduction of the principle, it would require very serious consideration at the hands of the government, and I do not at all accept the statement made by the hon. member for East York (Mr. Maclean) a moment ago, that the government have pledged themselves to the principle of the government ownership of railways. The government never did anything of the kind, nor is the principle of the government ownership of railways introduced in the amendment of the hon. member for West Toronto (Mr. Clarke). The amendment of the hon. member for West Toronto, as it has been properly characterized, is simply a notice to those who invest their money in their enterprise and to the promoters of the road who invest their money, that, at the proper time, if parliament or the government so determine, their franchise may be acquired by the government. The amendment does not go further than that; that is what it is in a nutshell. As to the duty of the government, I have to say to my hon. friend, that it is not a question for the government to consider at all. The Bill has been discussed before the Railway Committee, and they have determined upon it in a certain way. The position I have always taken upon Bills that come from the Railway Committee, is, to sustain the decision of the committee as far as I possibly could do. I do not say that this is a principle that should be adhered to, under all circumstances, because there may be exceptions in this case as in any other. But I have more than once submitted to the House, that upon questions which are referred to any of the Standing Committees, it should be the policy of the House to sustain the decision of the committee, unless—and in no other case—there is a very strong case made out that the committee has erred in some gross manner. There is no evidence in this case that the Railway Committee has been in error. There is as much to be said on one side as upon the other, and,

M. MONTAGUE.

for my part, having listened to the discussion very attentively, I have come to the conclusion, that in this instance, I should support the decision of the Railway Committee.

Mr. WALLACE. Before the question is disposed of, I ask the indulgence of the House to make a personal explanation in reply to a statement made by the hon. member for North Wellington (Mr. McMullen). His statement was: That I used my position in parliament; that I went to the government and bought some lands at one-tenth of their value, or one-tenth of what I sold them for—one-tenth of their value too, and that I, therefore, defrauded the government of the country. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will just state the circumstances of the case and nothing more. We had bought a property comprising a number of acres on the canal bank outside the city of Ottawa, and we discovered that there was a narrow strip between it and the roadway that runs along the canal bank. This narrow strip started at a point and ran to a few feet in width. It amounted to a quarter of an acre or half an acre of land, or something like that; I cannot remember the quantity. We applied to the government to purchase it, because it was between our property and the roadway, and was only four or five feet in width. It could have been no possible use to any one else; no one else could possibly desire to purchase it, and the government did not want it. We asked the government to place a price upon it, and the government did place their price upon it. We had nothing to do with fixing the price. We paid them that price, which, according to my recollection, was about the same price as we paid for the other portion of the land. The land was of no value whatever to the government. The government fixed whatever price was fixed, and we paid that price and purchased it from the government, as we had a right to do. It was a fractional part of an acre of land. The government got the price they themselves fixed, as the proper value for it, and everything was done fair and square, and the hon. member for North Wellington (Mr. McMullen), and some other gentlemen investigated the matter at that time, and tried to make a scandal. This was many years ago, and they utterly failed in their attempt.

Mr. McMULLEN. No.

Mr. WALLACE. They utterly failed in their attempt.

Mr. McMULLEN. Not at all.

Mr. WALLACE. They utterly failed to prove a single particle of wrong-doing. They bring the matter up to-day when it is ten