

my duty to take advantage of the motion for the second reading of the Bill to offer some remarks on this proposal.

The debate which has taken place during the last two weeks has been interesting and instructive. It has been interesting because of the number of eloquent speeches which have been delivered by members on both sides in connection with this proposal, and it has been instructive, Mr. Speaker, in the fact that a flood of light has been thrown upon the motives which prompted the government to take such decisive action, to take such speedy action as they took last session. Since this discussion commenced we have been enabled to see more clearly the real causes which impelled the government to refuse the Grand Trunk Railway Company permission to proceed with its original proposition. We are in a better position now to judge of the importance and value of the grandiloquent sentences which were uttered by the Prime Minister in introducing the measure to the House. There was no time then, in the estimation of the Prime Minister, to consider, to reflect, to weigh well the steps to which the country was being committed. Not a moment was to be lost. It was absolutely essential, in the best interests of Canada, that we should proceed immediately with the undertaking which was presented to us. So serious, so critical was the national position represented to us by the Prime Minister, that the reasonable requests which were made by hon. members on this side of the House that we should proceed deliberately, that we should have some further and more accurate information as to the country through which the proposed line was to pass, that we should have some more accurate and definite information as to the cost of this great undertaking, were all brushed aside, and were not deemed worthy of being entertained by the government.

So far as this parliament was concerned, the contract which was entered into last year between the government and the Grand Trunk Pacific Company was ratified. The people of Canada were held and firmly bound under the provisions of that contract; but so carelessly, so recklessly, if I may be permitted to use that expression without being offensive, was the contract drawn, that within one month after the prorogation of this House the contract was practically at an end; because while the people of Canada were bound under its provisions, it was made perfectly clear to us that the other party to the contract, the company, was not bound at all. And so, Mr. Speaker, after having rushed this project through the House last session we have been called together this session principally to ratify a new contract entered into between the government and the directors of the Grand Trunk Railway Company. We were given assurance after assurance during the debate of last session that the companies with

whom we were negotiating, that the gentlemen with whom we were dealing, were men of honour, that there could be no doubt as to their ability, no doubt as to their intention to carry out in so far as they were concerned, the contract entered into with them. But I repeat that the first condition to show their bona fides, the first act which they were called upon to perform to show that they meant to fulfil that contract, was left unperformed, and, according to the statement made by the president of the Grand Trunk Company in London, this session of parliament is being held practically for the sole purpose of passing an amended contract which has been prepared by the directors of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, and which we are now discussing.

I take it, Mr. Speaker, that the government have been placed in a most humiliating position. I take it that they could not have expected to have been treated very much better by the persons with whom they were dealing. They have been placed in this most humiliating position because of the precipitancy of their action and because they refused, without good and sufficient ground, in my humble judgment, to permit the Grand Trunk Railway Company to obtain access to the west by the means which the Grand Trunk Company at first proposed. At the opening of last session of parliament, on March 12th of last year, we were solemnly assured out of the mouth of His Excellency the Governor General that the whole question of transportation, a question far reaching and of the most vital importance to the people of Canada, was to be referred for consideration, for report and for advice to a transportation commission. On the 18th June last, when the House was discussing the question of granting substantial aid to the Canadian Northern Railway Company, to enable that corporation to extend their lines through Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, we were given an assurance by the right hon. Prime Minister that the government contemplated subsidizing only one transcontinental railway. He said that the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was not then an entity. It was a mere project in the air which might or might not be carried out. In his speech the other day, upon the resolution introduced precedent to this Bill, the hon. Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) declared that the government only commenced to frame the contract with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company on the 1st of July, or thereabouts. The time which elapsed from that date until the Bill was introduced by the right hon. Prime Minister last year was so short that, with all their business acumen, with all their legal ability, with all their experience in dealing with railway magnates, it could not have been expected that hon. gentlemen opposite could have framed a contract in that period of time that would have safeguarded, as it should