

to those which are enjoyed by those who are better able to pay their fare.

Mr. LISTER. I hardly think that my hon. friend is serious in the legislation which he proposes here. There is hardly a session of this House but that some hon. gentleman feels it to be his imperative duty to introduce some legislation that may have, in his judgment, the effect of popularizing him with the electors of the country. It may be, Sir, that railway companies are not always just. That may be true; but I think it would be inexpedient at the present moment, with the information which this House has before it, to propose this legislation—because I do not believe that my hon. friend really expects this Bill to pass—which might have the effect of impairing, to a certain extent, the earning power of the railway companies. The hon. gentleman must not forget that in Canada, a sparsely-settled country, we have as great railway facilities as are to be found. I believe, in any other country in the world. He must not forget that in days gone by when transportation was difficult, the capitalists of England and of other countries invested enormous sums in the building of railways in Canada in the hope, no doubt, of getting a profitable return; but these investments have proved to be very unprofitable. These railway companies are bonded for enormous sums of money, and the constant agitation that is taking place in Parliament, year after year, must of necessity prejudicially affect the securities of these railway companies, not only the securities that have been floated, but the possibility of getting further loans to improve their lines, and borrowing further sums of money. I do not think that a Bill of this kind should be passed without first being well considered by a committee of the House. These railway companies have invested their money in these lines, their property is there; yet hon. gentlemen feel justified in getting up in this House, over and over again, and treating the property of these companies as if it did not belong to them at all, but really belonged to the people of this country. When we gave them charters we gave them certain rights, and amongst these rights was the collection of tolls. Parliament has control of these tolls. Parliament has the right to say how much should be charged, at least the Railway Act provides that the Governor in Council should fix the tolls. If the hon. gentleman's Bill was an amendment to the Railway Act, placing it in the power of the Governor in Council to provide for what the hon. gentleman seeks here, one could readily understand it. But the hon. gentleman proposes, not to confide in the Governor in Council, which is the forum before which these railway matters must come; but he wishes absolutely, without investigation, without seeing how it would affect the revenue of the companies, without seeing whether it would impair

that revenue so much as to make the working of the lines impossible on account of reduced tolls, without inquiring whether it would have the effect of preventing them from paying interest on the bonds; in fact, Sir, by a leap in the dark, he proposes to impair, it may be, very seriously the revenue of the railway companies in Canada. The hon. gentleman, I do not think, intends to do any such thing. I rather believe that the hon. gentleman does not desire that the earning powers of the railway companies should be so diminished as to justify them in withdrawing from their work in this country. My firm conviction is that the hon. gentleman has introduced this Bill without that thought and consideration which usually characterize most things which he does in this House. The hon. gentleman talks about passes. I do not remember that the statement he made a moment ago, is strictly accurate; I do not remember that hon. gentlemen now on this side of the House were in favour of abolishing railway passes. I think that if it came to a vote, probably he would find that these passes would be abolished altogether. But that is a question by itself, it is not germane to this discussion at all. That is something that must be considered by itself. The question may arise in future whether, in the interests of the country at large, it is right and proper that the members of this House should have the right as members to travel upon these railways in attending to their public duties. It may be a question whether it would not be proper that no member should accept a pass from a railway company. It may be that that question which has been so long agitated, and which so many people are in favour of resolving affirmatively, may be adjusted in the same way as has recently been done in the Ontario legislature, namely, that the members of the House should surrender to the railway companies their mileage, and in return for that they should receive a certificate which would entitle them to travel free upon railways. In my judgment that would be a fair solution of this much vexed question—to give the railway companies the mileage of hon. members, and then these would be under no obligation to the companies, if they are now, which I do not believe. I do not think any member of this House is under any obligation to any railway company, or would act in respect of railway legislation any differently than he would if he had not received these passes. I do not think, Sir, there is any House in the world more independent of railway companies, and of other corporations, than the House of Commons of Canada. I have had much experience as a member of important committees of this House, the Railway Committee and the Committee of Banking and Commerce, before which all corporation Bills must be presented, and I have no hesitation in saying that it would be im-