

reasonable length of time, then there is nothing on which such an expectation could be founded. In this particular instance the line was surveyed a few years ago. Public men took an interest in it, and members on both sides of the House pledged their support to the building of the line. The people have been expecting it to be built for some time just as other people in districts throughout the West have been living for some years on the same expectation. Now these people are not anxious to move out, they would rather stay in Canada; but if no transportation is provided they will be compelled to leave the country. I believe, from the facts within my knowledge, that the psychology of telling people in a district that they will have railway transportation in a certain number of years will have a marked effect in bringing to an end the emigration of our people to other lands. A promise in an estimate—I say it advisedly—is not any good for the present condition of affairs; but if parliament in its wisdom sees fit to enshrine in a statute the pledge that although these lines may not be built this year, there will be material advancement with them in the course of three years; that will inspire the people with fresh courage to stand by their guns and keep their homes in this Dominion. I believe the psychology of laying out a programme for three years will have a marked effect upon the feelings of the people of the Dominion. In laying out a stated programme the Canadian National line will be in exactly the same position as a private company. A private company lays out, and presents its programme sometimes five years ahead, yet possibly railway communication will not be provided for for years to come. But they have an appropriation which is not recalled and which is used until it is exhausted. In this three-year programme, the Canadian National is asking to be placed only on the same footing with the same opportunity of extending its branch lines as a private company is placed by its directors and shareholders. But above and beyond that, the fact that we say, by legislation, that the court of parliament is prepared to construct these branch lines, will prevent hundreds, if not thousands, of Canadians from moving out of the country.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The minister is well known throughout the country as a master of humour and very good humour, but he seldom tries to disguise it as he did to-night under a serious mien. He affects to tell this committee that we are suffering from emigration; that men are getting discouraged and moving out;

[Mr. Graham.]

that they cannot be restrained from going by an estimate in the Appropriation Act to build a railway, but that if you put it into another act, a branch line bill, why, they will stay.

Mr. GRAHAM: I did not say that. At least, that is not what I intended to say. My right hon. friend is not quite giving my meaning to the committee. It would be impossible for any person to put through this House at this session an estimate for all those lines, but it is possible to make a pledge in a statute that this amount will be spread and expended over a period of three years.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I do not know whether the minister thinks he has improved the situation. I will repeat what I said.

Mr. GRAHAM: It does not need improving.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It needs it badly. The minister wants to convey to the committee the impression that this is to be a pledge that these roads will be built in three years. He knows it will be nothing of the sort, not a whit more of a pledge than an appropriation in the Appropriation Act.

Mr. GRAHAM: All this amount would not be put in an appropriation for one year.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The minister can put in the amount to be spent in one year.

Mr. GRAHAM: My right hon. friend knows he would fight it twice as hard as he fights the branch line bill.

Mr. MEIGHEN: The minister says that if you vote all the money you need for 1924, that will not do, because that is not embalming it; you get it embalmed when you put it in a branch line bill. There is not a whit more security for a settler in a branch line bill than in an appropriation act, nor is there as much. In an appropriation act, the money is voted on the theory and the principle that it is to be spent that year. We are asked this year to vote money that the government does not intend to spend at all, because the fact of our doing so will keep settlers in this district, but if we voted money to build the road this year they would run. Such is the theory of the Minister of Railways.

Mr. GRAHAM: I am sorry, but I did not express any such theory. That is the theory my right hon. friend is expressing, not mine.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is precisely what the minister says, in effect.

Mr. GRAHAM: Not in effect.

Mr. MEIGHEN: And in exact effect.