

the very foundations of interprovincial trade and perhaps the foundations of Confederation.

What we need in the present situation is economy. We in this country at present are apparently unwilling to make sacrifices. We want to spend all the money we can for everything in sight. Thousands of our young men made the supreme sacrifice of their lives during the war; yet we are not willing to economize sufficiently to enable us to pay the interest on our war obligations and extricate ourselves from our difficult situation in connection with our railways. Honourable gentlemen, I will tell you what I would do with the money that is represented in this Bill, and with more if this country could raise it; I would apply it to reducing the freight rates to and from our Prairie Provinces. I believe that in doing that, and in effecting economies we would be doing far more good than by continuing the railway policy indicated by this Bill. We do not know where it will land us. It is a fine thing to have these railways. They may be needed, and we may need dozens of other lines, but we have not the necessary money, we cannot afford them just now. What is required in this country still more is a determination to practise economy and return to sounder principles than we are following at the present time.

Hon. G. D. ROBERTSON: Honourable gentlemen, I rise, not to enter into any lengthy argument, but for the purpose of making a suggestion which I hope the Government will seriously consider. According to the notice given yesterday by the honourable leader of the Government, we are on the eve of the prorogation of Parliament, and whatever is to be done with this most important question must be done quickly.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN: Now.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: There is one feature which to my mind is very important and which has not been touched upon. I will refer to it in passing, and then make my suggestion.

There is one part of the great Canadian National Railway system upon which it does not take more than a dollar to earn a dollar. The Grand Trunk Railway proper, in Canada, earns a dollar on an expenditure of about 92 cents: but the expenditure of the Grand Trunk lines in the United States, both East and West including the Central Vermont, runs over the dollar mark; so the average of the whole Grand Trunk system is approximately 96 cents to earn a dollar. That has nothing to do with bonded indebtedness or guarantees, but refers simply to operating expenses. The average of all the rest of the lines—Canadian

Northern, Grand Trunk Pacific, Transcontinental, etc.—according to the latest report, which I have under my hand, is an expenditure of \$1.12 and a fraction to earn one dollar. Therefore the more business the Canadian National Railways does to-day the more it loses. Is it good business to build \$100,000,000 worth of more lines and spend the \$20,000,000 necessary to equip them, as I pointed out last night would naturally follow, and thereby aggravate the situation still more?

But that is not all. To my mind one of the considerations of most importance to this country is the financial credit of Canada. One of the most valuable assets that Canada has to-day is the financial stability and standing of the great Canadian Pacific Railway. If this mad competition goes on and we build lines at public expense to run into every hamlet which the C.P.R. touches, God help Canada.

What I desire to suggest to the Government to-night is that there is a way out of the dilemma in which we find ourselves. Ample justice can be done to all the localities where railway extension is found to be necessary. My suggestion is that the Government agree to withdraw this Bill, the principle of which it is obvious this House cannot and will not adopt, and that the Government forthwith proceed to amend its Supplementary Estimates so that they will cover the expenditures proposed for this year only. There is no necessity of providing at present for expenditures for the years 1924 and 1925. For the three-year period referred to in this Bill the Government wants \$28,000,000. I respectfully urge the Government to reduce the Supplementary Estimates to \$10,000,000, which is more than one-third of the amount asked for in the present Bill—

Hon. Mr. LYNCH-STANTON: Is the honourable gentleman in favour of building all these lines?

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: No.

Hon. Mr. LYNCH-STANTON: The ten million he proposes is more than one-third of the cost.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: I am trying to be generous; I am trying to find a way whereby no necessary railway construction may be held up. I am sure that the House will be inclined to give sympathetic consideration to a proposal of that sort from the Government, but that this House will not, with proper regard for itself, for Parliament, and the right of the people of Can-