

we hardly expected that men such as those who have been appointed to assist Mr. Blair would have been selected.

I have not one word to say against either of these gentlemen. My friend, Hon. Mr. Bernier, filled the position of Minister of Inland Revenue very creditably, I think, but I do not know that he is a man who has had much experience in railway matters. And I venture to say, speaking of him and of Mr. Mills, that gentlemen might have been found anywhere throughout this country, equally capable of performing their duties, as members of the Railway Commission, for one-half the salaries voted for the members of this commission last year. I do not know wherein the special strength of the Railway Commission is to be found as at present constituted. Has any of these gentlemen appointed to the commission—outside of Hon. Mr. Blair at least—any special experience in railway affairs? Is there one of them who has studied the question of transportation, who can unravel the mysteries of railway accounts? Or, so far as that is concerned, are we to have, in effect, a fourth member of the tribunal, a man trained in railway work, a man who has not only a theoretical but a practical acquaintance with the problems of transportation, a man who will be able when called upon to perform the duties which should be performed by the members of this commission? So far as I am concerned, I did not expect that the commission would be constituted just in this way, and I should doubt very much, under its present constitution, whether we shall receive from that tribunal all the benefits we were led to expect when the measure was brought before the House.

Now, having said so much, let me come to the question of the transcontinental railway itself. And let me say, first, that I do not understand that this is the time for me to discuss the details of the measure which is to be submitted by the government. I do not propose to follow the example of the mover and seconder of the address in that regard; but I do propose to ask the government a question and to place before them certain pronouncements of their own during the past session. I would ask the government why it was that any changes whatever were necessary in this measure which was heralded to us during the past session as the very acme and climax of statesmanship? Now, there is no doubt that the government, last session, regarded this contract as absolutely fair to the Grand Trunk Railway Company. I have under my hand the statement of more than one member of the government in that regard. My right hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Rt. Hon. Sir Richard Cartwright) stated in so many words that this was a contract not only of great advantage to the government, but also very advantageous to the Grand Trunk Railway Company as well. I will quote his words, because he spoke well on

in the debate and after mature consideration. He said, as reported at page 9361 of 'Hansard,' 1903:—

I believe a really good bargain may be one which is to the advantage of both parties. I think that this is notably an instance of this sort.

And I want to press upon the attention of my right hon. friend (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and want him to answer if he can when he comes to address the House, this fact, that the government stated, explicitly and definitely over and over again, during last session, that the Grand Trunk Railway and the gentlemen whose names were affixed to the contract were absolutely bound, that the Grand Trunk Railway Company had had submitted to them every syllable of that contract, and not only that, but, as the Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Fielding) said the interpretation of the Grand Trunk Railway Company of the provisions of that contract was exactly the same as the interpretation of the government. So, we have two propositions—first that this was an absolutely fair contract to the Grand Trunk Railway Company and to the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company, and, second, that the gentlemen named in the contract, gentlemen interested in the Grand Trunk Railway Company, were absolutely bound by the provisions of the contract and could not possibly get rid of the obligation. Let us see what these hon. gentlemen said. My hon. friend from North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) said:

It required the credit of the Grand Trunk Company of Canada, standing behind the Grand Trunk Pacific, to consummate this bargain. It would have been done, in no other way. We have the entire strength, resources and character of the Grand Trunk Company of Canada behind the Grand Trunk Pacific; the two are united together—a fortunate occurrence of circumstances a rare opportunity which the government has had the wisdom to seize upon; and by seizing upon it they have secured the construction of a transcontinental line upon terms that are, to say the least, surprisingly favourable.

And he said, further on:

But we have perfected an arrangement which we might not have been able to make twelve months hence. We have got into this arrangement a great company which perhaps might then see the matter in a different light, or possibly not be in a position to take hold of the contract and enter into the stipulations it has done. When you have a good thing, take it.

And my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Fielding) said:

But, Sir, we give them this contract, made in good faith not with empty promoters, not with people who are irresponsible, but with men who are the most capable railway men in Canada, with men who have given every guarantee of good faith, with men who are prepared to back our undertaking in a manner no company ever did before.

And the hon. Minister of the Interior (Hon. Mr. Sifton) declared—and I have his words under my hand—that this proposition