

CANADA

The Debates of the Senate

OFFICIAL REPORT.

SPEECH

The HON. J. P. B. CASGRAIN.
SENATOR

ON

THE CANADIAN NORTHERN RAILWAY ACQUISITION BILL

In the Senate of Canada, Ottawa, on September 5 and 6, 1917.

Wednesday, September 5, 1917.

Hon. J. P. B. CASGRAIN: Honourable gentlemen, this is certainly the most important matter that has come before this House. The members of the Senate are about to assume a responsibility greater than any that has ever been assumed by them during the existence of this honourable House. I must at the outset express my surprise at the levity with which the honourable leader of the Government (Hon. Sir James Lougheed) has approached the subject this afternoon. He is generally very much in earnest about all Government measures which he presents to this House, but this afternoon he seemed as if his heart were not in this transaction, and, knowing him as I have had the advantage of knowing him for more than seventeen years, as a good business man, I knew very well that it was hard for him to keep a straight face when telling us that we were doing good business in taking over the Canadian Northern.

The honourable leader of the House has given us very little information, notwithstanding the great desire of my leader (Hon. Mr. Bostock) to obtain information. The honourable leader of the

House read—and, I must say, not in his usual style, but in a very indifferent way, for evidently he had not opened the book before—some statements that are contained in this blue-book. Honourable gentlemen will remember that when we were called upon to vote the guarantee of \$45,000,000 we had a much bigger book than this, and it contained not only the statement made by the company, but also a statement by the Government, so that we might compare both statements. This book evidently—and I am glad the honourable leader of the Government has admitted it—has been prepared simply by the company, and, as I understand, the Government takes no responsibility whatever for the document. Later on, in dealing with this document, I will show that we cannot be expected to have very much confidence in it.

With regard to the honourable gentleman from Sydney (Hon. Mr. McLennan), I was at first uncertain as to how he felt. He said this Bill was distasteful to him, and I was almost in hopes that he would disapprove of it; but he had gone to the other Chamber, he said, and heard some one speaking in favour of this measure. It was none other than the Prime Minister of this country.