

the Grand Trunk Railway Company conceived that it would be in their own interest to have the railway project liberally aided by the parliament of Canada which they desired to promote. That is the secret of the whole business; that is where it originated. All the other considerations fell upon unheeding ears. All these dangers never struck our minds, never seem to have entered into our calculations; it never occurred to us that we were under such imminent peril; it never was suggested by anyone that the great future of Canada, the very life of Canada was at stake—until the Grand Trunk Railway Company made a call and laid their proposition before my hon. friends and colleagues of the government. I make bold to say that there is no evidence that the people of this country demand this legislation. I will commence with the province of British Columbia and ask you: Is there any call, loud or weak from the province of British Columbia that another railway should be put through the passes of the Rockies and carried to Fort Simpson? If there is, I have not heard it. I would like to see the proof that can be brought in support of any such statement. Such a feeling does not exist. I have no doubt that the people of the province of British Columbia, if this railway venture is going on, would like to see it pushed through their province. But I know that when it comes to the question of railway aid and construction in that province, the files of the Department of Railways will show what railways they want; and among them is not included a transcontinental railway into that province. Go over the files of the department, and you will find that the railways that they chiefly want are those that will go through southern British Columbia and give means by which the mineral products of that country can be taken to market. That is what they are asking for. Therefore, I say that, from wherever else the cry may come calling for the building of such a line as my hon. friends propose, that cry does not proceed from the province of British Columbia. Well, have we heard any loud appeal from the sister province of Ontario? Have we heard even a whisper of it before this thing was suggested? Of course, I do not deny that the very moment it is known that the government of the country is determined upon carrying out this project, you will hear cries innumerable in favour of it. Then all the papers and all the men who are friendly to the government will take up that cry, if their judgment or their consciences will allow them to do so. When the project is announced, then the cry will exist; but it did not exist, there was no voice, there was no word of it before the suggestion came from our friends in Montreal. Now, is there any cry in the west for a transcontinental railway? I dare say I may be taking up a position which

is singular to myself, because I observe very little in the public press suggesting a doubt as to the necessity or advisability of more railways in the West. I have studied the question somewhat, and I do not know just how soon or how far in the future the time might be when such a line as this would be called for by the West; but now or in the immediate future there would have been no demand for any such railway project as this.

Mr. McCREARY. Does the hon. gentleman mean on the Western prairies?

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. Yes.

Mr. McCREARY. I say there is congestion there through which the farmers of the country lost over six millions of dollars last year.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. My hon. friend (Mr. McCreary) will find that I have not altogether lost sight of this question of the congestion of which he speaks; he will find that I have considered it. Whether I have reached a just and proper conclusion or not will remain for those who consider the subject—

Mr. McCREARY. Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. BLAIR. Yes. I intend to present the argument. Let the arguments be dealt with, as they will be in the discretion of every one who hears them. I say, there has been no cry in the west for more railways, in the way of east and west long lines. My hon. friend (Mr. McCreary) says that there was a great deal of wheat remaining to be taken out last year. Was that because of the lack of another railway up through the undeveloped northern portion of that western country? No, Sir, that cry came not because there were not railways enough, but because the railways they had were not equipped with enough locomotives and enough cars. That is what the congestion arose from. These people have had no difficulty at all from any other cause than the shortage and shrinkage in the equipment upon these railways. If you have read carefully what has been said by these people, you will find that there is a general consensus of opinion that that was the trouble, and not because they wanted other railways, to be constructed just now in the unpeopled territory. The traffic was congested, but I think the congestion will very soon be overcome. I think perhaps it may be pretty well provided against now. But I state now that the three railroads—and I am including the Manitoba and North-western, for although they are branches they are still extending largely to the west and north-west—they are providing that country with all reasonable railway facilities that are needed at present.

Now, there has been no press agitation. Let me add that I have not heard of any agitation in the maritime provinces or in