

but to take over those roads. What would the transportation interests of Quebec have had us do? I venture to say that if the Laurier Government had been in office during the time we were in power, they would have pursued exactly the same course as the Borden Government did upon this question. There was no alternative. The National Transcontinental, the Grand Trunk Pacific, and the Canadian Northern would necessarily have had to go into liquidation, and at a time when the war was upon us, when it was impossible to finance those undertakings either in the United States or in Europe. We had to face not only the liabilities which they had assumed and the possible financial crises that would arise, but also the guarantees which the Federal Government as well as the government of the different Provinces had given to those roads. It must not be forgotten that there has scarcely been a time in the history of Canada when the railway companies of this country have not met with success in coming to Ottawa and extracting from the Government what was needed for the purpose of meeting their demands. It therefore became a question with the Borden Government whether we should take over those roads or advance to them sufficient money to meet the obligations which were then facing them and not own the roads. It requires very little consideration to come to the conclusion that the only policy to pursue was to assume the obligation and become owners of the roads. The Government of that day did not embark deliberately upon the ownership of railways. It was a situation that we had to confront entirely irrespective of the views which we might have held on the question of government ownership.

Now, why, I ask honourable gentlemen, should the late Government have the strong opposition of those interests in Quebec to which I have referred? What Government was it that initiated a reckless rivalry to the Canadian Pacific railway? It was not the late Government, The building of the National Transcontinental struck a serious blow at the prosperity of the Canadian Pacific railway. Who was it that assumed responsibility for striking a blow at the prosperity of the Grand Trunk railway? It was not the Borden Government. It was the Laurier Government, in inducing that Company to enter upon practically an orgy of expenditure absolutely unwarranted, in building a second transcontinen-

tal system. Thus we were called upon during the late election to face responsibilities which in no wise belonged to the Borden Government.

Furthermore, honourable gentlemen, it cannot be gainsaid for a moment that public opinion was behind the Government in assuming the ownership of those roads during the period to which I have referred. Both sides of Parliament supported it. The Opposition in the House of Commons did not oppose the policy of the Government in taking over the National Transcontinental, the Canadian Northern, or even the Grand Trunk. Hence it is difficult to understand why in the Province of Quebec the policy should have been pursued of not only attempting to eliminate the Liberal-Conservative party from Parliament, but also to extirpate it to the extent carried out.

May I quote to the House just a few figures with a view of establishing the contention which I have advanced—that no other sensible policy could have been adopted than that which was pursued by the Government. From Confederation down to the present time the Government of Canada has paid subsidies amounting to about half a billion dollars, including the construction of the National Transcontinental. Excluding the National Transcontinental, we paid out subsidies amounting approximately to \$250,000,000, and we likewise have assumed guarantees of bonds approximating half a billion of dollars. We have made land grants to companies exceeding thirty millions of acres. Notwithstanding those enormous obligations which we had undertaken up to the time of our assuming ownership of those roads, Canada did not own a mile of the railways we had so subsidised, in cash, in guarantees, and in land grants. Between 1909 and 1918, in loans and bond guarantees, we gave to the Grand Trunk railway and the Grand Trunk Pacific no less than \$70,000,000. During the short period between the creation of the Canadian Northern as a transcontinental system and our taking it over we gave bond guarantees to the extent of \$45,000,000, and a loan of \$15,000,000, and yet we did not own those properties. I say with the greatest degree of confidence that if the Government of that day had at that time not taken over those roads, but had allowed them to go into liquidation, whoever acquired them would have come back to Ottawa just as soon as Parliament met, and the annual pilgrimage for colossal sub-