

proceeded with at any of its stages in the absence of the minister. I say this not in relation to the principle of this Bill which has been introduced on behalf of the company seeking legislation, but because this Bill should not, in my judgment, take any stage, in committee or otherwise, without the full concurrence of the government, nor without the government's responsibility being clearly attached to it at every stage. We know that the former Minister of Railways and Canals, Mr. Blair, had very strong opinions as to the importance of the Canada Atlantic Railway to the Dominion of Canada as the owner of the Intercolonial Railway, and in connection with the government system of transportation. This Bill practically enables a private corporation, in so far as a corporation can be private—I mean in the sense distinct from the government of the country—to acquire a railway which a former minister, whose capability at all events nobody will dispute, thought should be possessed and controlled by the Dominion of Canada as a part of its great transportation system. There is not an hon. gentleman in this House who does not know and is not perfectly familiar with the opinion of Hon. Mr. Blair on this subject. That hon. gentleman believed after all the experience he had had from several year's control of the government railways that the Canada Atlantic Railway should become the property of this Dominion and be controlled by the same interests that ruled and operated the Intercolonial Railway and the other government railways. Now, Sir, this Bill, although a private Bill, proposes in effect to authorize the transference of that most important railway and its connecting interests in the corporation of the Grand Trunk Railway Company, which, as we know, and I say it without the slightest feeling of opposition or antipathy to the company, has interests not quite in accordance with the interest of the government railways of this country or with the interests of the maritime provinces. This Bill therefore should not proceed in the absence of ministers who speak with full responsibility on behalf of the government. According to the Minister of Railways, it is proposed to enter into some agreement—probably after this Bill has become law—to obtain for the government railway running rights over the Canada Atlantic Railway, and also over a small section of the Grand Trunk Railway between Coteau and Montreal. The Canada Atlantic is to become essentially a part of the Grand Trunk Railway system of Canada, and, as I understand it, it is contemplated that the government shall obtain running rights for the Intercolonial Railway from Montreal to Depot Harbour, there to connect with Georgian bay and Lake Superior. I see that the minister has entered the chamber and I want to ask him a few questions. I understand that he proposes to give to the board

of Railway Commissioners the power to settle the terms upon which these running rights shall be exercised. He says he intends to run his own trains independently upon the same track as the Grand Trunk Railway trains are run; and I understand he proposes that the Railway Commissioners shall settle rates from Depot Harbour to Montreal, but that the Intercolonial Railway is to remain independent of the commissioners from Montreal eastward. Much depends, not merely upon the rates that may be settled, but upon what the nature of the traffic is to be. What traffic over that section of the railway does he propose to bring within the scope of the contemplated agreement?

Mr. MACDONALD. May I suggest to my hon. friend (Mr. Barker) that this discussion would be more relevant when we come to the Bill on the order paper, of which the government has given notice.

Mr. BARKER. Certainly not. It is most expedient that we discuss it now, for the reason that the Grand Trunk Railway is asking power to obtain control of the Canada Atlantic Railway, and it is our duty to be quite sure that the acquisition of that railway by the Grand Trunk Railway may not be inimical to the general interests of the Dominion.

Mr. MACDONALD. My hon. friend, as I understand, does not offer any objections to the provisions of the Bill now before the committee, and unless he desires to obstruct I submit that he should not delay the progress of this measure to which he has no objection. If the hon. gentleman thinks that the policy of the government with respect to this other Bill requires elucidation he has the fullest right to deal with it when it comes before the House.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The policy outlined by the Minister of Railways was, that the government proposed to engage in the carrying of through freights from the lakes to the maritime ports—

Mr. EMMERSON. What I stated was that we proposed to acquire running rights over this railroad. I apprehend that my hon. friend would not deem that an impossibility; because to-day, under running rights the Canadian Pacific Railway runs over the Intercolonial Railway between St. John and Halifax. In this instance arrangements could be made not inimical to the interests of the country and certainly not inimical to the interests of the maritime ports. Our great object is not only to have cheap and expeditious transportation, but to have that transportation to the maritime seaports in winter particularly, and through the St. Lawrence route in summer. The details of the Bill on the order paper will come up for discussion and until then it will be premature for me to enter into details. The Bill